

16 March 1950

Dear Mr. Celler:

Briefly, here are the racial policies and practices of the three services today.

I. The Navy

The Navy adopted a policy of integrating Negroes in General Service ratings in 1946. This policy still obtains. There are today Negroes in every General Service rating, i.e., type job, in the Navy. There are not yet, however, Negroes in every grade within every rating. This is to be accounted for largely by the fact that (1) it takes a long time to become a petty officer in the Navy, and (2) the more technical skills require a considerable amount of school training before a man becomes a petty officer.

All Navy training schools are completely open to all qualified personnel without regard to race.

In schools and in General Service, Negroes work, eat and sleep under integrated conditions, ashore and afloat.

The Stewards Branch is still composed principally of Negroes, Guamanians and some Filipinos. This branch is not exclusively a racial branch any longer. However, at the end of the war, the Navy had a great surplus of stewards, and I believe there has been no recruiting of stewards at all since 1935. In fact, surplus stewards are being separated.

At the end of the war, 95 percent of the Negroes were in the Stewards Branch and 5 percent in General Service. The proportion is now 42 percent in General Service and 58 percent in the Stewards Branch.

The overall percentage of Negroes in the Navy is between 5 and 6 percent. The percentage of Negroes in General Service is between 1 and 2 percent. At the request of the President's Committee the Navy brought back



some Negro reserve officers in the Recruiting Service to help increase this percentage of Negroes in General Service. Three factors militate against a very large increase at the present moment: (1) the fact that the overall quota for enlistment has been very small, so that the numerical increase in Negroes does not affect the percentage; (2) the mental enlistment standard is relatively high, and few Negroes proportionately can qualify; (3) the low enlistment quota has built a backlog so that the Navy can select to meet its quotas the highest scoring men in this backlog.

As a result of a recommendation of the President's Committee, chief, first, second and third class stewards now have the ratings of chief, first, second and third class petty officers. Stewards can now also transfer to General Service if qualified.

The number of Negro officers on active duty in the Navy is now 17. I think there is not much chance of increasing this number greatly, because the Navy is dependent almost exclusively for its officer personnel on Annapolis and the so-called Holloway Program, which is a system of subsidizing education for college students, who compete successfully for the Holloway scholarships. Very few Negroes -- one last year, two presently and, I think, four next year -- are midshipmen. The competition for the Holloway scholarships is extremely rigorous, the successful candidates having to pass college board examinations and go before an examining committee. Presently there are ten Negroes in the Holloway Program.

There is no question in my mind, after visiting a number of Naval installations, that the Navy policy offers equality of opportunity to the Negro, and that in General Service there is no segregation whatsoever.

II. The Air Force

The Air Force, in May, 1949, announced a new policy which (1) opened up all Air Force jobs without regard to race; (2) opened up all schools without regard to race; (3) provided for the breaking up of the all-Negro 332nd Fighter Wing at Lockbourne Field, Ohio; (4) directed local commanders to screen the Negro personnel and send those qualified to school, and to transfer those assigned to Negro units but working with white units to the white organizations.

As a result of this new policy, the 332nd Fighter Wing has been completely broken up and its personnel sent either to school for further training, or to other commands. Generally, the so-called air base service squadrons, or Negro post housekeeping units, have been broken up and those qualified for separation have been separated; others qualified for school have been sent to school. The remainder have been transferred from their present job ratings to white outfits.



As a result of this program at the end of the first seven months, approximately 70 percent of the Negroes in the Air Force have been integrated with whites, either in schools or in mixed units.

The Air Force found when it screened its service personnel that anywhere from 6 to 35 percent of the men in the air base service squadrons were qualified for school training and have been sent to school. One of the most hopeful things about the new Air Force program is that the Negroes coming into the Air Force presently are, on the whole, of extremely high caliber. This is indicated by the fact that the percentage of Negroes in technical training schools is almost equal to the overall percentage of Negroes in the Air Force. In fact, at two training schools the percentage of Negro students exceeds the percentage of Negroes in the Air Force.

I have visited a number of Air Force installations, and at the camps that I visited -- with one exception -- there were no segregated units, and Negroes were completely integrated at work, at school, at messes and in barracks. Air Force commanders everywhere, though frankly stating they were apprehensive of the program when it was instituted, now say that their fears were groundless, the program is working well, and there are fewer racial incidents than under the old policy of segregation.

III. The Army

The President's Committee last spring recommended to the Army that it undertake a four-point program to realize the President's objective: (1) open up all jobs regardless of race; (2) open up all schools regardless of race; (3) modify the assignment policy so that Negroes would be no longer limited to Negro units and post overhead installations; (4) abolish the quota.

On September 30, 1949, the Secretary of the Army met the Committee's recommendations with respect to jobs and schools; on January 16, 1950, he met the Committee's recommendations with respect to assignment; and the Committee expects that within a relatively short time the Army will meet the Committee's recommendation on the quota, and Negroes will no longer be limited to 10 percent of the overall strength, but will be enlisted solely on the basis of their qualifications.

The Committee is waiting until the Army has had sufficient time to effect its new policy before conducting field investigations to determine the success of that policy. This is the procedure we followed with respect to the Air Force.

I left with you the other day reports on trips made by the Committee's staff to some Naval installations and several Air Force bases. I forgot to enclose, however, a copy of the Army's announcement of changes in its racial policy, and that is herewith attached. If you need more detailed information, I would be most happy to supply it. Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you the other day about this matter in which I know you are deeply concerned.

Sincerely yours,

E. W. Kenworthy
Executive Secretary

The Honorable Emanuel Celler, Chairman
Judiciary Committee
House of Representatives, U. S.
Washington, D. C.

