

EXECUTIVE ORDER & PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT
creating Pres. Comm. on Civil Rights
(Press release of Dec. 5, 1946)

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President's Committee
on
Civil Rights

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President's Committee
on
Civil Rights

From THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS
734 Fifteenth Street N. W., Room 706,
Washington, D. C.

Durham
EX3300 - ext 458

ADVANCE RELEASE - HOLD UNTIL: Wednesday, October 29, 1947, 12 Noon.

Washington, D. C., Oct. 29...A program to "guarantee the same rights to every person regardless of who he is, where he lives, or what his racial, religious or national origins are" was presented today to President Harry S. Truman by his President's Committee on Civil Rights.

The Committee reported to the President that it "has reviewed the American heritage and found in it again the great goals of human freedom and equality under just laws. We have surveyed the flaws in the nation's record and have found them to be serious. We have considered what government's appropriate role should be in the securing of our rights, and have concluded that it must assume greater leadership. We believe that the time for action is now."

Taking its title "To Secure These Rights" from the Declaration of Independence, the report recommends action by federal, state and local governments; by Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Judiciary, and by private groups and organizations. Special recommendations were made with respect to the District of Columbia, Guam, Samoa, and the Panama Canal Zone.

Four essential rights, the Committee said, must be strengthened and made equally available to all Americans:

- (1) The right to safety and security of the person.
- (2) The right to citizenship and its privileges.
- (3) The right to freedom of conscience and expression.
- (4) The right to equality of opportunity.

The Committee stated to the President that it had not sought to draw up a balance sheet, but had focused its attention on "the civil rights frontier." The Committee emphasized its conviction that the civil rights of the American people can be strengthened quickly and effectively by the normal processes of constitutional government.

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The 178 page report was prepared by a Committee of fifteen distinguished Americans, whose Chairman is Charles E. Wilson, President of General Electric Company. President Truman established the Committee on December 5, 1946.

Members of the Committee, in addition to Chairman Wilson are: Mrs. Sadie T. Alexander, Assistant City Solicitor of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Mr. James B. Carey, Secretary-Treasurer of the C.I.O.; Mr. John S. Dickey, President of Dartmouth College; Mr. Morris L. Ernst, New York Attorney and author; Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn of Rockville Centre, Long Island, former Marine Chaplain; Frank P. Graham, President of the University of North Carolina; The Most Reverend Francis J. Haas, Catholic Bishop of Grand Rapids, Michigan; Mr. Charles Luckman of Cambridge, Massachusetts, President of Lever Brothers and Chairman of the President's Citizens Food Committee; Francis P. Matthews, Omaha, Nebraska lawyer, former Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus; Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., New York City lawyer and Chairman of the Housing Committee of the American Veterans Committee; The Right Reverend Henry Knox Sherrill of Boston, Massachusetts, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church; Mr. Boris Shishkin, Economist, American Federation of Labor; Mrs. M. E. Tilly of Atlanta, Georgia, Secretary, Department of Social Relations, Women's Society of Christian Service, Methodist Church; Mr. Channing H. Tobias, Director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund and former senior secretary of the National Council, YMCA. Robert K. Carr, Chairman of the Department of Government at Dartmouth College served as executive secretary of the Committee.

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December 5, 1946

CAUTION: The following Statement by the President and Executive Order MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE UNTIL RELEASED. Release to all regular editions of newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 8:00 o'clock P.M., E.S.T., today, Thursday, December 5, 1946.

The same hour of release applies to radio announcers and news commentators.

PLEASE EXERCISE CARE TO AVOID PREMATURE PUBLICATION OR RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT.

CHARLES G. ROSS
Secretary to the President

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Freedom From Fear is more fully realized in our country than in any other on the face of the earth. Yet all parts of our population are not equally free from fear. And from time to time, and in some places, this freedom has been gravely threatened. It was so after the last war, when organized groups fanned hatred and intolerance, until, at times, mob action struck fear into the hearts of men and women because of their racial origin or religious beliefs.

Today, Freedom From Fear, and the democratic institutions which sustain it, are again under attack. In some places, from time to time, the local enforcement of law and order has broken down, and individuals - sometimes ex-servicemen, even women - have been killed, maimed, or intimidated.

The preservation of civil liberties is a duty of every Government - state, Federal, and local. Wherever the law enforcement measures and the authority of Federal, state, and local governments are inadequate to discharge this primary function of government, these measures and this authority should be strengthened and improved.

The Constitutional guarantees of individual liberties and of equal protection under the laws clearly place on the Federal Government the duty to act when state or local authorities abridge or fail to protect these Constitutional rights.

Yet in its discharge of the obligations placed on it by the Constitution, the Federal Government is hampered by inadequate civil rights statutes. The protection of our democratic institutions and the enjoyment by the people of their rights under the Constitution require that these weak and inadequate statutes should be expanded and improved. We must provide the Department of Justice with the tools to do the job.

I have, therefore, issued today an Executive Order creating the President's Committee on Civil Rights and I am asking this Committee to prepare for me a written report. The substance of this report will be recommendations with respect to the adoption or establishment by legislation or otherwise of more adequate and effective means and procedures for the protection of the civil rights of the people of the United States.

The members of this Committee will be:

MR. C. E. WILSON, Chairman; President, General Electric Company; formerly Executive Vice-Chairman of the War Production Board.

MRS. SADIE T. ALEXANDER, lawyer, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Assistant City Solicitor, City of Philadelphia; member of the Board of Directors, National Urban League; member of the Inter-Racial Committee of Philadelphia.

MR. JAMES B. CAREY of Washington, D. C.; Secretary-Treasurer, Congress of Industrial Organizations; Chairman, CIO Committee to Abolish Racial Discrimination.

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MR. JOHN S. DICKEY, President of Dartmouth College; formerly Special Assistant to the Secretary of State.

MR. MORRIS L. ERNST, lawyer and author, of New York City.

RABBI ROLAND G. GITTELSON of New York City; Spiritual Leader of the Central Synagogue at Rockville, Long Island; recipient of the Navy Commendation Medal for his services as the Jewish Chaplain of the Fifth Marine Division at Iwo Jima.

DR. FRANK P. GRAHAM, President of the University of North Carolina; formerly member of the War Labor Board.

THE MOST REVEREND FRANCIS J. HAAS, Bishop of Grand Rapids, Michigan; formerly Chairman of the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice.

MR. CHARLES LUCKMAN of Cambridge, Massachusetts; President of Lever Brothers; formerly consultant to the War Loan Division, United States Treasury.

MR. FRANCIS P. MATTHEWS of Omaha, Nebraska; Former Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus; Vice-President of the National War Fund; designated Papal Chamberlain by Pope Pius XII.

MR. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, JR., lawyer of New York City; Chairman of the Housing Committee of the American Veterans Committee.

THE RIGHT REVEREND HENRY KNOX SHERRILL of Boston, Massachusetts, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church; member of the Governor of Massachusetts' Committee on Racial and Religious Understanding.

MR. BORIS SHISHKIN of Alexandria, Virginia, Economist for the American Federation of Labor; formerly a member of the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice.

MRS. M. E. TILLEY of Atlanta, Georgia; Secretary, Department of Social Relations, Women's Society of Christian Service, Methodist Church.

MR. CHANNING H. TOBIAS of New York City, Director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund; formerly Senior Secretary of the National Council of the Young Men's Christian Association.

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EXECUTIVE ORDER

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ESTABLISHING THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE
ON CIVIL RIGHTS

WHEREAS the preservation of civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution is essential to domestic tranquility, national security, the general welfare, and the continued existence of our free institutions; and

WHEREAS the action of individuals who take the law into their own hands and inflict summary punishment and wreak personal vengeance is subversive of our democratic system of law enforcement and public criminal justice, and gravely threatens our form of government; and

WHEREAS it is essential that all possible steps be taken to safeguard our civil rights:

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. There is hereby created a committee to be known as the President's Committee on Civil Rights, which shall be composed of the following-named members, who shall serve without compensation:

Mr. C. E. Wilson, Chairman; Mrs. Sadie T. Alexander; Mr. James B. Carey; Mr. John S. Dickey; Mr. Morris L. Ernst; Rabbi Roland G. Gittelsohn; Dr. Frank P. Graham; The Most Reverend Francis J. Haas; Mr. Charles Luckman; Mr. Francis P. Matthews; Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.; The Right Reverend Henry Knox Sherrill; Mr. Boris Shishkin; Mrs. M. E. Tilley; Mr. Channing H. Tobias.

2. The Committee is authorized on behalf of the President to inquire into and to determine whether and in what respect current law-enforcement measures and the authority and means possessed by Federal, State, and local governments may be strengthened and improved to safeguard the civil rights of the people.

3. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are authorized and directed to cooperate with the Committee in its work, and to furnish the Committee such information or the services of such persons as the Committee may require in the performance of its duties.

4. When requested by the Committee to do so, persons employed in any of the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall testify before the Committee and shall make available for the use of the Committee such documents and other information as the Committee may require.

5. The Committee shall make a report of its studies to the President in writing, and shall in particular make recommendations with respect to the adoption or establishment, by legislation or otherwise, of more adequate and effective means and procedures for the protection of the civil rights of the people of the United States.

6. Upon rendition of its report to the President, the Committee shall cease to exist, unless otherwise determined by further Executive Order.

HARRY S. TRUMAN

THE WHITE HOUSE,

December 5, 1946.