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President's Committee on Civil Rights

MEMORANDUM

April 7, 1947

TO: Mr. Robert K. Carr

FROM: Milton Stewart *MS*

SUBJECT: Conference with Marcus H. Pay,  
Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War

I discussed with Mr. Pay the possible role which this Committee could play to effect the status of minority groups in the armed forces. He expressed great hope that the Committee would see fit to cover this area in its final report. He suggested that the appropriate witnesses would be the Secretaries of War and Navy. Along with Secretary Patterson, we ought to hear General Paul (G-1 Personnel) and Mr. Pay; Secretary Forrestal ought to be accompanied by General Paul's opposite number, the Rear Admiral who happens to be in charge of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

Within the next year there will be a new opportunity to re-examine armed forces' policy on minority groups. If Congress should pass the Army-Navy merger bill, the new Secretary of National Defense will have the problem of mediating the present Army and Navy policies.

The best solution for this would be for the adoption of the Navy policy with the Army's implementation. The Navy's statement on this question, which I submitted to you several days ago, is an excellent one. It is carried out to some slight extent. The Army's policy, as reflected in the Gillem report, (of which Ray is strongly critical because it maintains segregation) is carried out right down the line. Substantially, the difference is that on Navy posts in Washington Negro and white enlisted men serve together, share barracks and mess rooms, etc. In the Army they are carefully segregated. At the same time, the Navy has one Negro commissioned officer, while the Army has some thirteen hundred.

The worst offender of all is the Veterans Administration which does not even have any beautifully worded statement of policy, but which is frankly discriminatory in its provision of facilities. One problem which all of these agencies have is that the farther away one gets from the office of the Department's Executive the worse the situation is. The Army has done the best job of carrying through; the Navy

has done the best job of verbalizing policy and has tried ritfully to enforce the policy on certain low levels; and the Veterans Administration has done nothing at all. Negro Veterans are placed in separate wards even where unnecessary in Northern cities; they are isolated together regardless of their disabilities instead of being put into places where they can be treated with patients like themselves. The War Department, on the other hand, has maintained non-segregated hospitals in which a broken leg is a broken leg, whether it happens to be black or white.

The recruitment of Negroes in both the Army and the Navy is limited on a quota basis. The Navy has a policy (I am not sure whether it is written) which states that no more than ten per cent of the complement of any crew or post shall be made up of Negroes. The Army has an over-all policy of having no more than ten per cent of its total personnel Negro. One control exercised by both services is through the scores which recruits must make on general classification tests. The Army now requires Negroes to achieve scores of 90 if they are to serve in the ground forces; whites must score 80 and 99 for the Air Forces. The Navy has a straight requirement of 90. Pay expects that by July 1st the Army will have changed its policies so that all three services will have the same requirement.

One other important difference is that the Army has adopted an educational policy to win tolerance for Negro troops.

I suggest that the full Committee might profitably spend a day listening to Secretary Patterson, Secretary Forrestal and General Bradley, with their respective aides. We should then make use of the Merger situation, which will roughly coincide with our report, to cover the civil right of all citizens to bear arms equally. Inasmuch as these are also Federal agencies it might be advisable to invite the Civil Service Commission to appear at the same time to report on discrimination in the Government service.