

*A correspondent finds a moral
for Southern politics in Korea*

Bigotry and Fighting Men

August 1950

THE inconsistency of race hatred and bigotry with our democratic ideals has seldom been put more concretely than it was by W. H. Lawrence in a recent issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. Writing from Korea, Mr. Lawrence said in part:

"For this correspondent, fresh from the politics-as-usual (or even worse-than-usual) atmosphere of the recent South Carolina primary election, another contrast is apparent between these two worlds: a contrast of the unworthy and the finer moments of democracy. In Carolina two men fought for a seat in the United States Senate, offering as their principal qualification the ability to uphold white supremacy and oppose the program of the President of the United States.

"Here in Korea, white, black and yellow men, under the direction of the same President, are fighting and trying to uphold the principle that men of whatever color should be free to govern themselves in a democratic society and not be subject to a totalitarian communism imposed by force of arms. . . . But while waiting for transport I saw the most convincing answer to the racial appeals of the Carolina politicians. An ambulance plane from the Korean front, allowed to take off because of the urgency of its errand, rolled to a stop on the airstrip where Red Cross ambulances were lined up. The walking wounded came out.

"The first man off the plane was a big Negro rifleman with a patch over one eye. Then a sandy-haired white man wearing a crucifix and clutching his wounded arm. There were several others, black and white, and then the litter patients, about equally divided.

"Here they were united in the bond of sacrifice, suffering and fighting in a battle so that some yellow men could rule themselves. It was a far cry from the rantings of Johnston and Thurmond on the theme that only white men were fit to rule and that Negroes must always play a subordinate role to a white master. . . . With disgust I recalled the terribly low level struck by both candidates for senator from South Carolina.

"It seemed hardly possible that the same country in which such appeals for high office could be made also furnished these black and white men I had seen fighting together so that yellow men could be free to run their own lives. A song from my favorite musical, 'South Pacific,' furnished a partial clue: 'You've got to be taught to hate.'

"These kids obviously had not been taught to hate each other or anybody else for that matter. A few more days of combat would give them the bitter incentive to kill their North Korean enemies. But the common sacrifice and suffering they are enduring should keep them from ever hating each other over the circumstance that one has a skin of different color from another."

*Military efficiency dictates new
racial policies in the Armed Services*

"Freedom To Serve"

August 1950

EVER since the beginning of World War II, the military services have been increasingly preoccupied with the question, How can Negro servicemen best be utilized? The question, it should be noted, is not regarded by the services as primarily a moral one. Their main concern lies in making the most efficient use of all personnel and, at the same time, maintaining a high degree of morale. When it came to Negro servicemen, this seemed an almost impossible dilemma to some military leaders. They were prepared to admit that racially segregated units results in inefficiency and waste of skills. But they were also convinced that abolishing segregation would bring about friction, impair morale, and further loss of efficiency.

What the services have discovered in the past few years is that the dilemma was an artificial one—it did not really exist at all.

An important step in this process of discovery came in 1948 when the President issued his Executive Order 9981. The order stated: "It is hereby declared 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. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale."

To implement this policy, the order also established the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, made up of distinguished citizens who had demonstrated their leadership in both administration and human relations. The job of the Committee was to advise and assist the armed services in developing policies which would achieve the objective set by the President.

On May 22, 1950, the Committee issued its first report, a summary of the progress made to date. The report, entitled "Freedom to Serve," tells a remarkable story. It is an account of how the armed services' policies with respect to race have been virtually transformed in the last few years.

At the very start, the Committee ran head-on into two basic assumptions that had long determined military thinking about Negro utilization: (1) Negroes do not have the education and skills to perform efficiently in the more technical military occupations; and (2) Negroes must be utilized, with few exceptions, in segregated units in order to avoid grave difficulties.

Meeting the military on its own premise and considering the question purely from the viewpoint of military efficiency, the Committee had serious doubts about this reasoning. It conceded that, owing to lack of educational advantages,

Negroes as a group do not measure up to the same standards of skill and ability as the white population. But, it asked, does this group difference justify denying to the *individual* Negro—solely on the grounds of race—the opportunity to qualify for, and serve in, any job whatsoever? At the same time that segregation deprived the skilled Negro of equal opportunity and deprived the service of his skill, it also magnified the inefficiency of the unskilled majority by concentrating them in separate units.

The second question still remained to be dealt with: that is, Would the breakdown of segregation result in even greater loss of efficiency because of impaired morale? For an answer to this question, the Committee examined the Navy's experience.

THE NAVY

Since February, 1943, the Navy has gradually been integrating Negro sailors in general service, as contrasted with the old practice of limiting Negro enlistments to the messman's branch. The Navy's revision of policy went through several phases. First, Negro sailors were assigned exclusively to shore installations and harbor craft. As the influx of Negro selectees increased, however, the Navy found that it could not provide employment for all of them in these limited assignments. In late 1943, as an experiment, two ships were manned with Negro crews under white officers. As a next step, the Navy assigned Negroes to the crews of 25 auxiliary ships of the fleet, limiting the assignments so that Negroes would not make up more than 10 per cent of any given crew. The success of this experiment led to the opening up of all auxiliary fleet vessels to Negroes, and, in 1946, the Navy took the remaining step of opening up all general service assignments without restriction.

The order declared: "Effective immediately all restrictions governing types of assignments for which Negro personnel are eligible are hereby lifted. Henceforth, they shall be eligible for all types of assignments in all ratings in all activities and all ships of the naval service. . . . In the utilization of housing, messing and other facilities, no special or unusual provisions will be made for the accommodation of Negroes."

Has the Navy experienced any difficulty as the result of its policy of assigning men solely on the basis of individual ability and the needs of the service? The Committee asked this question not only of commanding officers but also of petty officers and lower grades, both white and Negro. All of those questioned replied that there had been no racial friction.

The thing that most impressed the Committee about the Navy's experience was that in the relatively short space of five years the Navy had moved from a policy of complete exclusion of Negroes from general service to a policy of complete integration in general service. In this about-face, the Navy had not been primarily motivated by moral considerations or by a desire to equalize treatment and opportunity. Chiefly, the Navy had been influenced by considerations of military efficiency and the need to economize human resources. Equality of treatment and opportunity, the Navy had discovered, was a necessary and inevitable condition and by-product of a sound policy of manpower utilization.

The Navy's experience was revealing, but some military officials doubted that

it was conclusive. Negroes, they pointed out, made up only two per cent of the sailors in general service. The proportion in the Army and the Air Force was much larger, ranging between seven and 10 per cent. Would integration prove as satisfactory with that relatively greater percentage of Negroes? The affirmative answer was supplied by the experience of the Air Force, whose Negro strength was between seven and eight per cent.

THE AIR FORCE

During World War II the racial policy of the Air Force was that of the parent Army—a 10 per cent restriction on Negro enlistments, utilization in segregated units, and greatly limited job opportunities. By the end of the war many high-ranking officers in the Air Force were convinced that the concentration of almost all Negroes in a relatively narrow range of duties had deprived the service of many skills which were lost by reason of segregation. But they did not begin to find a way out of this dilemma until the President issued his executive order in July, 1948. Then the Air Force set to work to evolve a policy which would simultaneously improve the efficiency of the service and extend equality of opportunity to all personnel.

The net result was a new policy, announced in May, 1949, which read in part as follows:

"There will be no strength quotas of minority groups in the Air Force troop basis . . .

"Qualified Negro personnel may be assigned to fill any position vacancy in any Air Force organization or overhead installation without regard to race . . .

"All Air Force personnel will be considered on the basis of individual merit and ability and must qualify according to prescribed standards for enlistment, attendance at schools, promotion, assignment to specific duties, etc.

"All individuals, regardless of race, will be accorded equal opportunity for appointment, advancement, professional improvement, promotion and retention in all components of the Air Force of the United States."

Within six months' time, this new policy was in almost complete effect throughout the Air Force. And the President's Committee found it was working well. Almost without exception the commanders interviewed by the Committee's staff stated that they had put the new policy into effect with some misgivings. They did not for a moment question the accuracy of Headquarters opinion that "the traditional utilization of Negro manpower primarily in Negro units has contained certain elements of waste and inefficiency." But they doubted whether, in open competition with whites, many Negroes would be able to qualify for technical positions, and they questioned whether the gain in manpower utilization would be worth the trouble they expected to result from assigning Negroes to white units.

Without exception commanding officers reported that their fears had not been borne out by events. A far larger proportion of Negroes than expected had demonstrated their capacity to compete with whites on an equal basis, to absorb highly technical school training, and to perform creditably in their subsequent assignments. Furthermore, commanders testified that racial incidents had diminished, rather than increased, since the new policy had gone into effect. With all schools and jobs open on a basis of merit, officers were no longer

plagued with complaints of discrimination. Some officers who candidly stated their personal preference for the old ways nevertheless volunteered that the new program benefitted the service and caused less trouble.

THE ARMY

By the end of World War II, the Army had come to the conclusion that its policy over a long period of years had not proved satisfactory and that changes must be made in the utilization of Negro troops in the postwar Army. To this end, the Army convened a special board of general officers, known as the Gillem Board, and charged it with submitting recommendations to the Secretary of War and the Chief of Staff.

In the winter of 1945, some 2,500 Negro soldiers from the supply services had answered a call for volunteers for front-line duty. These Negro volunteers had been formed into platoons and assigned to white companies. The combat performance of these platoons had effectively established the feasibility of integration at this level without difficulty.

On the basis of this and other evidence, the Gillem Board made six principal recommendations:

- (1) Negro units in the postwar Army should in general conform to white units.
- (2) Qualified Negroes should be used in overhead units.
- (3) A staff group in Army headquarters and in every major command should be created to supervise racial policy and practice.
- (4) Periodic surveys of manpower should be made to determine positions that Negroes could fill.
- (5) Re-enlistment should be denied to the "professional private" (men of low qualifications who habitually re-enlisted and, in the case of Negroes, kept the 10 per cent quota filled).

- (6) There should be experimental groupings of Negro and white units.

Three years after the Gillem report, the President's Committee found that there had been little progress toward the goals set up by the report. Moreover, in the Committee's opinion, segregation and the 10 per cent quota on enlistments made the achievement of those goals virtually impossible. As a result, the Committee made further recommendations to the Army, which were adopted early in 1950. The most important points of the new policy are as follows:

"Army school quotas . . . will make no reference to race or color. Selection of personnel to attend Army schools will be made without regard to race or color. . . .

"Military Occupational Specialties will be open to qualified enlisted personnel without regard to race or color. . . .

"In furtherance of the policy of the President . . . it is the objective of the Department of the Army that Negro manpower possessing appropriate skills and qualifications will be utilized in accordance with such skills and qualifications, and will be assigned to any (overhead) or (organized) unit without regard to race or color."

As a final step, in March, 1950, the Army abolished the quota system limiting Negro enlistments to 10 per cent of total strength.

The Army's job of integration is a considerably larger one than either the

Navy or the Air Force faced. Negro soldiers at the beginning of 1950 constituted between 9 and 10 per cent of total enlisted personnel. Many of them were in all-Negro combat and combat support units which formed part of the immediate striking force.

It is still too early to appraise the effect of the Army's new policy. But *Freedom to Serve* concludes by saying: "The Committee firmly believes that as the Army carries out the Committee's recommendations which it has adopted, then within a relatively short time Negro soldiers will enjoy complete equality of treatment and opportunity in the Army."

*An official report by the
Civilian Assistant, Department of Defense*

Integration In The Armed Forces

By James C. Evans

November 1954

DURING recent years, the Armed Forces have continuously and vigorously implemented principles of equality of opportunity and treatment for Negro personnel. There has been a conscientious endeavor to carry forward the principles laid down by the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense for the most effective utilization of all military manpower.

A clear enunciation of the position of the Department is found in a radio broadcast on 17 February 1954, when Dr. John A. Hannah, then Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Personnel), made the following statement: "The obligations to defend our country and our beliefs are borne equally by all of our citizens without regard to race or color or religion . . . we believe in the essential dignity of every human being, and that, within certain limits necessary to maintain an orderly society, each individual should have an opportunity to determine the course and patterns of his existence. . . . It should be a real gratification to all thinking Americans to know that our Armed Forces are leading the way in demonstrating both at home and abroad that America provides opportunities for all of her people. . . . In spite of all predictions to the contrary, I have yet to find a field commander in any service that has anything but commendation for complete racial integration. . . ."

Evidence of the extent of the concern on the part of the Department is found in connection with schools for the children of personnel stationed at military installations. Without any formal directive to the effect, several schools for dependents located on Government property in a number of states had been operating for some time without incident on an integrated basis. As the question of integration in schools received further and widespread attention, it was deter-