

Integration In The Armed Forces

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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-

mined that all such schools operated by the military would begin operation on an integrated basis with the beginning of the 1953 fall term, and this policy was carried out on schedule.

There remained questions concerning schools located on military installations, but operated on a segregated basis by local educational agencies. Policies on this problem were finalized on 12 January 1954, when the Secretary of Defense directed "that the operation of all school facilities located on military installations shall be conducted without segregation on the basis of race or color," regardless of other considerations. It was stipulated that this policy would be placed into effect "as soon as practicable, and under no circumstances later than September 1, 1955." In connection with the promulgation of this directive, Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson stated, "We hope all interested parties and all local communities will cooperate." It will be noted that the Supreme Court decision against segregation in public education followed four months later.

The Air Force has accumulated considerable experience on integration in training as a result of a policy decision made in connection with technical training contracts for Air Force personnel with schools in states having segregation laws. This policy was to the effect that "The Air Force will let contracts for technical training in civilian schools in accordance with the effectiveness of the service that the school can render to the Air Force. When airmen are to be sent to schools in states having statutes requiring segregation, Negro airmen will be given the option of not going if they choose. In that event, the Negro airmen will be sent to a school which can accept both white and Negro airmen."

Traditionally, there has been a concentration of Negro personnel in the stewards branch of the Navy. A significant step was taken toward changing this situation when the Department of the Navy announced on 1 March 1954, that separate recruitment of stewards was being abolished. The effect of this policy is to give all seamen recruits an equal opportunity to qualify and apply for service in any of the Navy's specialty groups at the end of recruit training. While it is realized that the present racial concentration will not be immediately dissolved under this new program, Negro recruits are now assured of the opportunity, as all others, to choose their branch of service on the basis of recruit orientation, testing, and training.

The Department of the Army, in regulations issued on 23 April 1954, directed the omission of racial designation in orders covering the reassignment of members between Army Reserve units. This directive will facilitate the participation of Negro personnel in Army Reserve activities on the same basis as that now obtaining for personnel on active duty.

The Secretary of the Navy, on 20 August 1953, directed the complete elimination of all barriers to the free use of previously segregated facilities on Government-owned Shore Stations of the Navy. Despite evidences of objections to thus modifying racial customs of long standing in some sections, effective negotiations and follow-up brought about full implementation of this directive well ahead of the schedule initially outlined.

Concurrently, similar moves were carried out by the Army and the Air Force with a minimum of publicity and no untoward incidents. This action advanced equity of treatment for civilian employees toward a status already attained by

personnel in uniform.

In a directive issued 11 June 1954, the Secretary of Defense provided for a program to familiarize contracting officers, contract administrators, and other personnel dealing with procurement with "the spirit, intent, and requirements of the President's policy" of non-discrimination with respect to Government contracts.

Through this program, the Army, Navy, and Air Force, in addition to the immediate procurement objectives, conduct educational programs to impress upon their contractors their own responsibilities regarding non-discrimination.

For the Armed Forces, 30 June 1954 was earlier agreed upon as the time limit for the termination of any remaining all-Negro units in the services. The program proceeded ahead of schedule, so that at the above date the often-asked question about Negro units within the program of integration had become one of mere definition.

There are no longer any all-Negro units in the Services. The few Army units still carrying racial designations in the records include a considerable proportion of non-Negro personnel. Where a small unit may be found containing only Negro personnel, the condition is transient. Where concentrations are encountered, as in the case of Navy stewards, formal barriers do not any longer prevent the transfer of the individual as an individual and without regard to race.

In a positive direction, the abolition of racial quotas for Service school selection and the subsequent selection, training, and assignment without regard to race or color have resulted in more than doubling the number of Negro officers and enlisted men in attendance at these schools. . . .

Contrary to earlier predictions, removal of racial quotas and other restrictions has not resulted in any imbalance of ratios of Negro personnel in the Services. Moreover, additional opportunities in the Services for training and assignment on the basis of individual merit have resulted in a definite increase in the number of Negro officers.

The following percentages of Negro personnel against total personnel in the military Services over a recent period give significant evidence:

	1 July 1949	1 July 1954
Army Officers	1.8 %	2.97%
Army Enlisted Men	12.4 %	13.7 %
Navy Officers	.0 %	0.1 %
Navy Enlisted Men	4.7 %	3.6 %
Air Force Officers	.56%	1.6 %
Air Force Enlisted Men	5.06%	8.6 %
Marine Corps Officers	.0 %	0.1 %
Marine Corps Enlisted Men	2.08%	6.9 %

The Department of Defense maintains no racial statistics. However, the data upon which the above summary is based are believed to be sufficiently valid and comparable for present purposes. This summary is of further significance in that current policies for eliminating racial designations will make it increasingly difficult to compile such comparative data in the future.

It is the established policy of the Department that there shall be no discrimi-

nation among its Civil Service employees because of race, sex, color, or religion. Fair practices officers are assigned in all areas to further the implementation of this policy.

Even so, the utilization of the individual Negro employee at his maximum potential often appears as a distant objective. This is particularly true of women employees. A continuous evaluation of the impeding factors in this situation is being made, and progress has been noted. However, as compared with other Government employees, or as measured against the Negro in military uniform, much remains to be done to accomplish full equity as regards testing, selection, orientation, training, assignment, guidance, and advancement, not to mention full recognition and reward on the basis of service rendered.

Community customs and mores in regard to race vary in different parts of the nation and of the world. It is paradoxical that the Negro citizen in uniform has frequently been made to feel more at home overseas than in his home town.

These matters are largely beyond the direct purview of the Department of Defense. Even so, marked progress is being made in clarifying civilian-military relationships off duty and off post. While this work is still in its beginning, achievements to date in replacing controversy with cooperative effort reflect great credit upon the commands immediately concerned.

The Military Services will help themselves and the nation as a whole in advancing further the promising developments in cooperative relationships with the civilian community. Failure in their effort will create problems almost without end, as we strive to maintain in a ready state at home larger military forces than ever before stationed among the civilian communities in time of peace.

Racial factors here may be large and variable. They may become dominant as improvements on the military post bring into sharper contrast conditions off the post. Civilian prerogatives having priority, cooperation and coordination are everywhere indicated. Housing, transportation, family life, education, and recreation are examples of community-related areas which impinge directly and forcefully upon military proficiency. . . .

In military areas, promising improvements of considerable scope are possible in the Reserve Officer Training Programs, the Reserve Forces, and the National Guard as well as in the further routine advancement of qualified officers now on duty.

The program of equity of opportunity for all personnel, military and civilian, is based on the concept of obtaining maximum effectiveness in the defense effort through full utilization of the maximum potential of every individual. Anything less is wasteful, especially in view of threats to our national security, besides being contrary to the basis tenets of our government.