

RESTRICTED

NATIONAL UNITY AND ECONOMIC MOBILIZATION

10 April 1953

1871

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION--Dr. L. C. Hunter, Member of the Faculty, ICAF	1
SPEAKER--Mr. Malcolm Ross, Chairman, University of Miami Press..	1
GENERAL DISCUSSION	14

Publication No. 153-132

INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

Washington, D. C.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1872

Mr. Malcolm Ross, Chairman, University of Miami Press, was born in Newark, N. J., on 1 June 1895. In 1919 he received his A.B. degree from Yale. He served as first lieutenant, Air Service, U. S. Army, 1917-1918; was reporter for the Dallas News, Louisville Courier-Journal, New York Morning World; associated with American Friends Service Committee in Southern coal fields, 1932; Public Information Chief, National Labor Relations Board, 1935-1941; Writers Unit, Office of War Information, 1941-1943; and chairman, President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 1943-1946. Mr. Ross has been Chairman of the University of Miami Press from 1947 to the present time. His published writings are: "Deep Enough," "Hymn to the Sun," "The Man Who Lived Backward," "Sailing the Skies," "Profitable Practice in Industrial Research," "Machine Age in the Hills," "Death of a Yale Man,"--a study of the first years of the National Labor Relations Board, and "All Manner of Men,"--drawn from experience as chairman of FEPC. He has also contributed to the "New York Sunday Times" magazine, "Saturday Evening Post," and others.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

NATIONAL UNITY AND ECONOMIC MOBILIZATION

1873

10 April 1953

DR. HUNTER: Admiral Hague and gentlemen: Our lecture this morning belongs to the so-called vertical series. Its subject, as you know, is "National Unity and Economic Mobilization." Again and again in our study this year we have been reminded that the problems of economic mobilization are not confined to the field of materiel resources. There are psychological problems; there are moral problems.

In World Wars I and II, the United States has faced problems of national unity of a kind which have been met in few democratic countries. We are a very mixed people, drawn from many racial groups, national origins, and religious creeds. The potential sources of disunity are numerous and powerful. In a national emergency they can become elements of great weakness, especially if they are exploited by the enemy.

Now, to discuss these problems of national unity as they bear upon economic mobilization, we have invited to our platform this morning a man who has been long concerned with these problems, as both an individual and a public official. As the wartime chairman of the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC), Mr. Ross was at the storm center of the controversies growing out of the activities of this controversial agency. I needn't remind you, either, that FEPC is still the source of considerable political and social dissension within this country. Before the war, also, Mr. Ross, as public information chief of the National Labor Relations Board, for six years was in contact with another area of national dissension and conflict in this country.

For these reasons we are very happy to have with us this morning Mr. Malcolm Ross, who will speak on the problems of national unity in economic mobilization. Mr. Ross.

MR. ROSS: Mr. Chairman, Admiral Hague, and gentlemen: I am under some little handicap in not knowing the extent of your interest in the field in which I have been closely and in a detailed manner associated. I will ask your pardon for reading my first remarks and will take more pleasure in the question period when we can perhaps have a meeting of the minds on these things. If I tell you things that are already known to you, forgive me and go at me later.

What qualifications I have to address you stem from three years of experience with the impact of group dissensions on the recruitment of manpower during World War II. The problem as it affects economic mobilization, both then and now, seems to fall into two important parts. The first is technical: How quickly can we expand our labor force in order to meet expanding production?

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1874

Today we have a tight labor market. On 1 January 1953 the number of unemployed stood at a little over one million. This is little more than the number involved in normal job turnover. As of this moment, then, our full complement of industrial workers is on the job. We have no visible reserve. By experience, however, we know upon what hidden reservoirs of manpower to draw.

This would be from the pool of housewives, superannuated workers, handicapped workers, draft-exempt men, and adolescents. Such workers gave us the needed edge in production in World War II; yet we remember that in terms of the necessary training, housing, transportation, and disruption of home living it was not an efficient work force.

There is another major source of productive manpower upon which we drew in World War II and must again if confronted with mobilization. These are the Negro, Mexican-American, and other minority group workers who are untrained and underutilized because of employment barriers raised against them by white workers and employers. Data to determine the extent of this reserve are nonexistent. But by dead reckoning we know it to be of prime importance in any planning for an emergency.

During the late war we learned much about how to control industrial discrimination and we have made further progress during the succeeding years. Yet barriers still exist and they still deny us a great potential of productive skills.

This practical recruitment problem has a psychological facet--national morale--which I conceive to be the second major part of our problem. Discrimination injures the spirit of its victims. The Negro worker, thirsting for his long-denied place, suffers in his purse, his pride, and his patriotism. No man of any color or race is his full self under spiritual and economic restrictions.

During World War II--to take an example from another race--a southwest regiment of Mexican-Americans conducted themselves gallantly in the field, yet their Mexican-American brothers at home remained segregated, were thrown out of Anglo restaurants, and were denied skilled work in mines and war plants.

There is small evidence that we have cured these evils sufficiently to suppose that mobilization, should it come next month, would provide these dark-skinned citizens their proper place and their proper pride of place as wholehearted patriots.

Valid reasons, one such as security, and invalid reasons, one such as prejudice, raise difficulties in the recruitment of manpower. Face them we must, for practical reasons of production, and for the intangible reason of maintaining national morale in the face of a world bitterly divided on racial and color lines.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1875

In terms of accomplishment in World War II, the Federal hand in removing racial barriers proved its worth. When we look back a dozen years to the premobilization period of 1941, we can afford a grim shudder at the sorry status of minority group Americans as a potential war industry labor force. Northern plants making munitions and material for the war in Europe had expanded by drawing in the large numbers of unemployed white workers. The adults of the 13 million American Negroes were on farms, in service, or at unskilled jobs. The percentage of Negroes in 1941 in manufacturing was lower than it had been 30 years before. Many trade-unions had constitutional barriers to Negro membership. Two-thirds of the Negro labor force was located in Southern states. The labor of our 1.5 million Mexican-Americans was similarly underutilized in 1941.

The President foresaw this would be a mechanized war and that the cork of discrimination had to be pulled from the manpower bottleneck. Six months before Pearl Harbor he declared nondiscrimination to be the national policy. This was based on the practical need to engage the services of all qualified Americans in defense plants and "in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders."

The President appointed an FEPC. During this Committee's first two years it was an unregarded appendage to larger bodies, enjoying no authority and small prestige of its own. In May 1943 a new Executive order established a new FEPC supplied with funds to carry out the anti-discrimination policy and sustained in its authority by orders of the President on all departments to mind their p's and q's on discrimination.

This was a new field for Federal intervention. Many protested: "You cannot legislate against prejudice." True enough; prejudice is a state of mind which laws cannot reach. But prejudice also has the practical effect of denying a man equal opportunity to earn his living, and that is an overt act which law can reach.

The new FEPC adopted the administrative procedures which the Federal Trade Commission and other agencies had set up to achieve their aims while at the same time protecting the rights of the accused. You know the familiar safeguards: No Committee action taken except upon sworn complaint; a first attempt to settle complaints by informal negotiation of the employers and unions; the next step of a public hearing with recorded testimony from both sides; and, finally, a decision of the Committee based on the record. At this point FEPC had to abandon accepted procedure since it had no enforcement powers and could not, as congressionally sponsored agencies do, refer its findings to a Circuit Court of Appeals. Its only recourse was an appeal to the President of the United States for his intervention. Obviously, it would not have been well to run to the President whenever someone defied the Committee. In only two situations was White House aid requested.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1876

How well did this haphazard machinery work? FEPC satisfactorily settled nearly 5,000 cases by informal negotiation with employers and unions, and this without benefit of newspaper publicity at either the complaint stage or the settlement stage. The impression that FEPC normally met with unyielding opposition was created by the comparatively few difficult cases which received newspaper notoriety through public hearings and through the vocal opposition on the floor of Congress from those who resented and fought the very existence of an FEPC.

Let me cite one such settlement which, although on an unusually large scale, was not untypical. Lockheed Aircraft at Los Angeles in 1944 had only 39 Negro employees among 48,000. The management accepted the Committee's recommendations on how best to integrate Negro workers. By August 1944 Lockheed had nearly 3,000 Negroes in nearly 100 occupations and no intimations of violence between white workers and Negroes occurred.

The multiplication of such settlements, plus the favorable atmosphere which the mere existence of the national policy against discrimination created, certainly added greatly to our productive power. At the peak there were 107,000 nonwhite workers in aircraft, 182,000 in shipbuilding, and 142,000 in ordnance. I could continue that list. Nationwide, one in every 10 war production workers at the peak was either a Negro or a Mexican-American.

Who shall say that VE-day and VJ-day would have come as quickly as they did had the Federal Government not foreseen the necessity to strike down the barriers against utilizing minority group skills?

The South, which resisted FEPC more than any other section, still showed wartime advances of Negroes into skilled jobs previously denied them. There was an increase of 75,000 nonwhite employees in manufacturing throughout the deep South. For the time being at least, the tradition of excluding Negroes from training and upgrading was broken.

Interracial friction in war plants accepting Negro workers was lower than it had been during the First World War, when there had been no active nondiscrimination policy in force.

The race riots of World War II were street brawls, such as the fearful happenings in June 1943 at Detroit. During the worst of that riot, white workers in the automobile plants, accustomed to having Negroes work on the assembly lines beside them, led their Negro friends to their homes in safety through the raging streets.

The fact that Negroes had an authority to whom they might appeal was very likely responsible for the small number of strikes over racial issues in war plants. FEPC had no mandate to intervene in strikes, and it did so only when requested by a war agency; yet FEPC aided directly in the settlement of 40 strikes in which white workers were resisting

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1877

the employment of Negroes, or Negro workers had struck for real or fancied grievances against their race.

The public hearings were sounding boards for those who cherished their traditional privilege of maintaining discrimination without challenge. Certain railroads and their unions, several street railway systems and their employees, certain munitions makers, and several national unions used every weapon in the legal and publicity books to defy and undermine the Committee's authority.

I will not cite them by name. Since the war far-reaching changes of attitude and practice have occurred among many of the then recalcitrants. My purpose is to point out the latent hostility to this venture of Federal intervention in race matters, a hostility which has diminished yet remains a strong factor in present calculations.

Let me dispel any assumption that FEPC was the sole or even the most important element in the wartime program against discrimination. By Executive order the Federal Government was obligated to be a model employer, as were the War Department, the Navy Department, and the Maritime Commission, while the War Manpower Commission was specifically ordered to use its full powers to wipe out discriminations in employment. FEPC was the watch dog, muzzled against biting, but able to bark loudly to alert others.

In the last moments of its existence, in 1946, FEPC requested all the Departments to evaluate their particular experiences with anti-discrimination. Let me quote letters from the Secretary of War and the Acting Secretary of the Navy. The late Judge Patterson, in concluding his factual report, stated his appreciation "of the fine cooperation the War Department has received from the FEPC staff throughout the country in the endeavor to secure resolution of occasional conflicts in the administration of policy." Acting Secretary of the Navy Sullivan stated it to be: "the studied opinion of the Navy Department that the procedures and policies have had salutary effect and that cases in which discrimination is alleged are decreasing in number."

These statements take on meaning from the facts that nonwhites at the peak in World War II constituted 15 percent of the War Department's 950,000 field workers and 13 percent of the Navy's 493,000-- in both cases the ratio of Negroes to whites in the population.

It is to my mind a justifiable conclusion that a firm policy at the top produces beneficent results in the practical field of minority group hiring and utilization. Contrariwise, when the policy weakens at the top, discrimination revives. For example:

1. During the last months of its existence, FEPC summarized its experiences in a final report. Included was a survey made by the

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1878

Bureau of the Census in St. Louis which analyzed what had happened to Negro workers during the cutbacks at the end of the war. Negro workers were released in larger proportion than were whites. Skilled Negro workers were cut back to return to the broom and the shovel handle.

2. Full employment during the years since the war has kept Negro workers on the pay rolls, and the effects of improved union and employer practices have to a degree retained them in skilled positions. Nevertheless, when we are considering the possibility of gearing millions of underutilized workers into a mobilization economy, it is well to recall these simple truisms from World War II experience: Negroes at the beginning were untrained for needed skills; they experienced exceptional difficulty in getting training and in being placed on the job when they did acquire skills; they were last hired and first fired.

3. That slow ascent up the ladder is certain to happen again on a significant scale should we be faced with a new manpower emergency. When I refer to Negroes, I also mean Mexican-American citizens and those numerically fewer minority group citizens who are singled out for unfair treatment.

4. Before leaving the practical effects of World War II, we should take heed of what great shifts in Negro population it brought about. More than 700,000 Negroes migrated across state lines, mainly from the South. Transplanting workers means a costly duplication of housing and services even if these be white workers. The relocation of southern Negroes in overcrowded cities of the North and West brings the additional hazard of racial jealousies.

5. The days of importing southern Negroes as strike breakers in the North with all the aftermath of hostility from white workers, are mercifully gone. But remaining sadly with us is the fact that Negro newcomers in northern communities seem to inspire those discriminations which the North has been all too ready to ascribe to the South. Negro workers do not become farmers in the North. They gravitate to the cities and then, unlike white workers who go back where they come from, the Negroes remain on in their new homes.

Certainly, from these facts we now know that the integration of Negroes into the normal American life of equal rights and opportunities is as much a northern problem as it is a southern one. Sectionalism, with all its ugly recriminations between the North and South, should be a thing of the past; yet it lingers, a weak spot in both our domestic unity and our international relations. During the war, moves to place Negroes in war plants against the wishes of white workers and employers cut squarely across the mores of the South. Southerners would agree that equal opportunity is in the American tradition; southern representatives in Congress reflected local opposition and indeed I suspect that some of them turned on the heat higher than home temperatures in a competition to see who could best scorch this monster, FEPC.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1879

Consider also a deep-rooted labor tradition. The ancient scarcity concept that the number of jobs is limited and that a union card entitles its holder to his share in those limited jobs, persists even into our times of full employment. The tendency to union monopoly works special hardships on outsiders seeking the highest-paid skilled jobs, particularly on outsider Negroes and Mexican-Americans. When FEPC challenged this concept several big northern unions outdid southern traditionalists in their outcries against such Federal intervention.

What of the employers? Generally speaking, employers in the early 1940's had only recently and after violent struggles accepted the mechanism of collective bargaining. They felt themselves sufficiently harassed in working out ordinary plant problems with their unions. They might not have objected to hiring capable Negro workers, but they preferred not to stir up the hornet's nest by introducing Negroes against the union's opposition. Often that opposition represented merely a very small but vocal minority. Often the minority was silenced, and both union and employer worked out the Negro hiring problem under impetus of national policy and war necessity. But there were notable instances where the union and the employer joined as one party to resist FEPC.

On the wartime FEPC staff were many Negro lawyers, researchers, and field representatives, a not surprising fact when it is considered that this agency was deeply concerned with the affairs of their people. The fact outraged many Congressmen who from time to time inserted into the "Congressional Record" lists of Negro staff members, their names, background, and salaries, each time with the implication that this was prima facie evidence of the agency's unworthiness of public trust. Objectively reckoned, this was a cruel and an effective disparagement of 13 million Americans. It also served to make FEPC's enforcement problems all the more difficult.

The Communists of those days, emboldened by the fact that Russia was our then ally, took their usual ride on an issue which was being pressed by Americans of no Communist leanings whatsoever. To my knowledge the staff of FEPC, strong proponents as they were of enforcement, did their job under orders of the President of the United States and without hints from Moscow.

The charges against the agency were hurled in a perfervid sectional atmosphere, were headlined by the press, and were mainly refuted in the Negro press which few people except Negroes read anyway. That the succeeding years saw filibusters in Congress is no cause for surprise. Many but not all of the causes of the wartime acrimony about FEPC still underlie our thinking and our practices. From the experience, I would draw this conclusion:

The recruitment of minority group workers runs smoothly when it is done quietly by men of good will and determination. On the other

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1880

hand the whole effort falls into a bog of dissension when it is publicly debated on political grounds by partisans on an emotional plane. I think I can offer you much comfort by describing later the effectiveness of what has been done in the past 10 years by quiet men of good will. I still stand appalled at the unbridled emotions called into play each time this issue has been submitted to Congress. There are no pat solutions, except perhaps what might happen if men of good will in Congress could meet for quiet planning of legislation to meet the issue as the practical and national problem which it truly is. We are well grounded nowadays in the findings of anthropologists that there are no differences in the bloodstreams of any races of man. Yet the practices of tribal discriminations are immemorial, the appeals to our reason only minutes old in the time schedule of history.

Having subjected you to my personal thoughts on this subject, grant me leave to put into personal terms those experiences which gave direction to my thinking and built the foundation for my final conclusions.

I cite three youthful episodes which at the time left their impressions, although it required many maturing years to reveal their meaning. Today I would agree with Gunnar Myrdal that "the problem of the Negro is the white man," a conclusion which I certainly did not hold as a young shavetail at Langley Field during the First World War. At that time I was enthusiastically hedgehopping in the powered egg crates known as Jennies. The soldiers who did the hot, heavy work at Langley Field were drafted members of a work battalion of Negroes. We gave those ex-field hands a derisive name--the Dixie Volunteers. The term amused us. It seemed the proper order of nature that United States soldiers, if black, should be rigged out in dungarees, segregated, given lowest rank, no promotions, and no combat opportunities.

We youngsters in 1917 at Langley Field merely reflected national mores when we accepted the servile tradition of Negroes. They were house servants, field hands, trash men, broom and shovel wielders. During the 300 years since the first landing of African slaves at Jamestown, they had had only half a century in which to make the hard transition into freedom. Since Reconstruction days southern Negro workers and southern white workers had both been eating low on the hog and fighting each other for their shares. While we white kids with gold shoulder bars were grandly ordering Negro soldiers about, something to which we were blind was momentarily changing the pattern of civilian life. World War I for the first time brought southern Negro workers into competition with northern whites and with explosive results. The first race riot of those times occurred in East St. Louis when a trainload of Alabama Negroes was imported to work in the expanding local industries. The town could have absorbed these workers and many more, but some hothead called a meeting, speeches were made, and the mob turned loose to beat, kill, and drive out of town even its own respected

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1881

Negro citizens. Southern Negroes in search of Northern wages were to meet such receptions many times during World War I.

My next myopic experience with a minority group was an arm's-length association with Mexican-American miners at Bisbee, Arizona. Here, after graduation from Yale and a restless stint of bond selling in Wall Street, I had drifted into a job as mucker at the 1,400 foot level of the Copper Queen mine.

I was untrained--the lowest critter underground--but I was paid \$6.40 a day for shoveling the muck my miner partner blasted. The Mexican-American miners worked up top, picking away rock by rock a 500 foot hill of low-grade ore. They were daily maimed or killed by rock slides, yet the most skilled Mexican-American drew only \$3.00 a day.

To us Anglo-Saxons underground it seemed fit and proper that the greasers should get half as much pay for more dangerous work and be socially ostracized in their cabins up Brewery Gulch where the flash floods sometimes drowned them.

To grouse is as natural as breathing with every miner. It is dark and crabbed and dangerous underground and a certain tough rebellion enters every miner's heart. But the Bisbee miners had special grievances. They had lost a violent strike, they were unorganized, unled, belligerent, and they took it out in feelings of social and economic superiority over that little brown skinned Jose Lopez.

Our Anglo-Saxon unity against the greasers fell apart among ourselves. The men of Cornwall and Wales had dug in the mines before the Roman invasion of Britain. We had among us the descendants of both. No American could tell a mustached, squat and muscular Cousin Jack from a mustached, squat and muscular Welshman; but they knew each other as tribal enemies. Memories of ancient border raids 5,000 miles away in distance and centuries in time set their teeth on edge. In the midnight black tunnel of an American copper mine, the Cousin Jack miner and the Welsh miner could not pass without an insult, or pause without a fight.

In later years I came to know the full strength of the sectional animosities stirred by the Civil War. It is small comfort on that score to recall the belligerency of the natives of two adjoining English counties, but at least we are warned that these feelings run deep and that we had best mind our manners in our verbal raids across the Mason-Dixon line.

There are, I think, certain truisms on which we must reckon in dealing with group dissensions: that most men are good at heart,

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1884

yet prejudiced in their own favor; that this prejudice, when joined to insecurity, can raise barriers high enough to block other group workers from employment.

We so glibly fall into the habit of saying workers do this or that, workers refuse to accept certain men. But it may be ourselves who are generally to blame, not the particular worker who thinks to protect his wages with the all too familiar weapon of prejudice.

Let us ourselves assume for the moment the burden of collective guilt for the prevalence of prejudice. Or if that load is too heavy, let's invent a gentler name for it. Segment-thinking might fit.

Segment-thinking is indulged in by specialized groups whose education, status, race, or color has been so homogeneous and isolated from the other groups that it can be characterized as a special psychological phenomenon. Its existence is proved by the mere fact that we have a Negro press, Jewish press, a foreign language press.

Insofar as these segments retain their narrow points of view, they are in need of being welded together by the processes of democracy. A defective welding makes the whole weaker. In times when national unity is our first need, any weak welding is dangerous.

You may say that it is not well to discuss these weak spots, that great progress has been made, as indeed it has, that laissez faire is the best long-run cure. Yet against the measure of our progress there remain the animosities which arise primarily from a lack of mutual interchange of knowledge of each other.

Our national history is filled with the battles between those who considered democracy an abhorrent leveling process, which must certainly drag all that is high and noble down to a mean common level, and those others who had faith that the men of spirit and intelligence among the economic lower levels would make good citizens if allowed the opportunity to climb, even if many expensive toes were trodden on during the process of democratization.

The process has gone far since Thomas Jefferson; yet still among us we have scholars of the humanities, industrialists, top management men, bankers, top men in the Government and the armed forces who went to good schools, joined good clubs, go to good churches with their own kind, but have never in their lives had a give-and-take conversation with a worker, a Negro, or even one of a different faith.

All told, we diverse Americans do live and work together in what is certainly the most perfect democracy on earth--more perfect than England or France because we are not homogeneous--because we have already demonstrated that we can fuse all races of people together

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1883

into one working political unit. Still, for our own salvation, we must recognize and mend our weak spots. One very sound way to do so--and a way we have conspicuously adopted during the last decade--is to renew ourselves at the early springs of political faith and humanist feeling of Benjamin Franklin, George Mason, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, the Adamses of New England, and the Lees of Virginia.

The Bill of Rights is having an unprecedented revival in our times. But, if its truths are eternal, it is also well to recognize a greater difficulty in applying the Bill of Rights in our complex civilization than in their simple one. The early fathers were members of small communities where everyone knew one another. The New Englanders among them cut their political eye teeth in town meeting. The problems of fences, bridges, paupers, assessments were thrashed out face to face, and no greater citizen could deny the lesser his voice in meeting. The Southerners had plantations as their small and intimate training grounds in the knowledge of men and the handling of affairs.

North or South these men knew one another, knew their communities, could be spokesmen for their neighbors on great issues, and when they dared the role of spokesmen, they knew they must answer face to face for their opinions.

A clarity of mind and soul illuminated these eighteenth century men who went directly from running farms, counting houses, print shops, and plantations into the troublous ordeals of winning a war in the field and simultaneously inventing a political framework for the rights of man. This the Marquis de Lafayette, looking back on that struggle, had to say about it:

"The independence of the United States began a new era of political civilization which will finally extend over the whole world and which is founded on the natural rights of mankind."

There is an awesome quality about such a politically sagacious prophecy, for it is a cold fact, 150 years after Lafayette made it, that the American creed of equal and fair play has nourished our domestic strength to the point where it can be asserted as the hope of white, yellow, and black peoples the world around.

But let us not smugly suppose that we have already realized Lafayette's concept of our destiny. Consider this American creed of equal and fair play as a sound and tested working principle--then check off in your mind its present stage of political application--in Africa, China, Korea, Russia. How badly is the world prepared to adopt this creed as a political platform! How unfair of history it seems that the world should suddenly burst into racial, color, and ethnic revolt before the principle of equality and fair play has had the maturing seasons it needs for its wholesome development.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1884

We ourselves had that maturing season. After all, this country was not born in 1776. It was adolescent at Magna Carta, a young man at Plymouth, an adult at Valley Forge. Yet grounded as we are in the Bill of Rights, things have happened to us since 1776 which have diminished our voice as world spokesman for democracy. It is not that we have more closely embraced racialism and religious intolerance but rather that the evil effects of slavery caught up with us, that immigration came too fast for our digestive powers, that the necessity to be both a stamping ground for the industrial revolution and simultaneously the world's most complex melting pot lost us that simplicity of approach to people which lent Franklin his wisdom and Jefferson the purity of his ideals.

The wonder is that in our fuss-budget and fascinating civilization we have had any moments of return to first principles. But that return journey was surely begun during the past decade. World War II began the process by presenting a practical need to give all Americans an opportunity in war production and in the armed forces. To save our skins we took steps which we are now discovering led to the higher ground of moral standards. Today this is apparent in a dozen important fields of action, among them these:

The Federal courts have assumed jurisdiction in cases where discrimination within industry was fostered by contracts between employers and their unions. That the Supreme Court took such a case argues that the denial of equal job opportunities in interstate industry is a matter of Federal concern under the Constitution. Once let such cases come before the Supreme Court and we may assume that a denial of these rights will be declared illegal. Indeed they have been in two notable cases which seem clearly to say that unions must not discriminate against members because of race or color and that employers have no right under our Constitution to abet such discrimination.

Negro opportunities for a higher education under stimulus of Supreme Court decisions have been vastly enlarged. I am told by a faculty member of a southern university that the first Negro to enter his graduate school carried with him a large placard bearing the words "This space reserved for Negroes." He was the only Negro in the school. He carried the sign along the corridors, placed it beside his desk, and so maintained his own little personal segregation. The white students grinned at this traveling Negro area and in time the sign was discarded.

My latest data, nearly a year old, show 128,000 Negroes in American colleges, a ratio of one Negro to every 117 Negroes as among a country-wide average of one college student for every 62 inhabitants. The heavy ratio in favor of white students is as nothing compared to the extraordinary fact that we are producing so many trained Negroes, and must

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1885

in years ahead make places for them suitable to their abilities--not, I may add, places given them simply because they happen to be Negroes.

There are today 11 state FEPC's, 7 of them with full enforcement powers. True, they are all in the North, but they operate in an atmosphere of enforcement plus education, which was impossible in the frenetic days of the wartime FEPC. The New York State committee has quietly obtained compliance from parties who successfully defied wartime regulations.

There are today more than 1.5 million Negro members of trade-unions. Among these of course are many Negroes who have only second-class membership rights. Should employment fall off, their second-class status would surely be used to the deprivation of Negro member equal opportunity. It is a point worth noting while there still may be time to correct the inequity.

Many employers who under the pressures of World War II reluctantly employed Negroes and upgraded them to skilled jobs have found the innovation to be of practical use and moral satisfaction.

There are today 20 city ordinances requiring equality of opportunity. Breached they often are, but in more than 50 cities there are community councils composed of citizens of various categories who give their time and energy in a hopeful grass-roots movement to better local group relationships.

Today the atmosphere is generally favorable for the effective action of such organizations as the National Urban League, the Anti-Defamation League, the National Jewish Congress, the NAACP--each dedicated in its field to sustaining the civil rights, the good name, and the chance for decent living of its peoples.

Our churches are for the most part alive to the moral connotations of this market-place problem of discrimination. Our universities are perfecting their new curriculum of human relations, and are increasingly sending out graduates who are very likely to find careers in the newly expanding civic, municipal, and special groups who are attacking the problem. The strong movement for equality of training and promotion in the armed forces is too well known for me to do more than mention it as one of this long list.

These, then, are the affirmative forces at top level and at the grass roots which are breathing new life into the Bill of Rights.

Time is the precious substance, time in which to discard out-worn habits, time in which to knit our diverse threads into an invulnerable fabric.

Thank you.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1886

COLONEL BARNES: Mr. Ross is ready for your questions, gentlemen.

QUESTION: Realizing that the import of what you say is absolutely correct, that we do have a huge manpower pool that we might utilize to better advantage, in this, let's say, migration of this manpower pool to an area where it might be used, how would you suggest we overcome the situation that arises similar to the Puerto Ricans in New York at present, or to the areas in Baltimore that we must drive through in order to go farther north than here? They are completely underdeveloped and are a complete drag on the social system of the city. How would you suggest that the Government, or the community, or anybody take care of that situation that inevitably arises?

MR. ROSS: I think, sir, that moving in on several fronts at once is the only answer found immediately effective. The Puerto Rican situation is distressing. American citizens are poured into those slums in New York and there is a very explosive situation there.

Two things, I think, would help. One of them is effective government contract compliance. If the Government really sustained the policy of nondiscrimination for all war providers in every contract, it would give the Puerto Ricans you are talking about a chance to make a better living. They would move out of congested New York and become citizens in widely distributed communities. Nationwide, if contract compliance were made effective, I don't think any other national police powers would be necessary.

On the human side of how those people are going to get along with their neighbors, how they are going to live, I think it is promising that community groups have taken into their own hands the betterment of intergroup relations. There are 50 such community projects scattered over the country.

Let me give you one example, from Texas. During the late war Texas was tough on Mexican-Americans, so much so that Mexico withdrew the right of workers to cross the Texas line to harvest Texas crops. That hurt, and out of that grew a Good Neighbor Commission frankly designed to meet the situation and get Texas back into the good graces of Mexico. Today some 110,000 workers come into Texas from Mexico in the harvest season. The Good Neighbor Commission has 40 small commissions scattered all over Texas, and it has brought in diverse special-interest groups--bankers, clergymen, citizens, and housewives. They are beginning to understand that good international feelings have a cash value.

In every big city in the North, usually after some terrific event has spark-plugged it, such as the Detroit race riot in 1943, they have set up citizen groups, usually tied to the mayor or to some other government unit, making them quasi official. It is very much on my mind.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1887

We are trying to do that same thing in Miami, Florida, where I am now living. I think if different people in all walks of life and all interests come together into a common council where they can swap troubles and take proper action, we won't see this phenomenon of slum clearance proponents being labeled Communist simply for taking the part of Negroes and trying to get them a better place to live.

I believe a sensible central position of the state and the National Government may rid us of slums in 10, 15, or 20 years. But citizens must tackle the job locally.

CAPTAIN HAYES: My question has to do more with the organizational aspect rather than the social aspect in integrating Negroes into our economic society, business, and military. I think you will agree that industrial management is perhaps the most advanced in this particular field. Would you agree with me?

MR. ROSS: Yes, I think I would.

CAPTAIN HAYES: I think the armed services come next. You brought up the point that we have 128,000 college graduates of colored extraction coming up for whom we must have jobs. You said they had to be employed on an ability basis and not on a racial basis.

I believe that is the problem which affects the executive in many of these cases--how do you keep the ability and racial problem separated and how do you keep objectivity in that respect? I think that's the problem we are running up against.

MR. ROSS: Captain, the reason FEPC was criticized during World War II was because of the assumption that it was going to press everybody into an organization despite their ability. Nothing of the kind was ever intended, but in the existing atmosphere that was the general feeling. We have calmed down from that feeling a good deal. Witness what industry is doing. It seems to me that if we have personnel managers who know how to judge ability and who won't be influenced by the color of a man's skin or by his religion, they can apply the same ability standards to all, and it becomes a question of integrating any person of known ability.

Then your human problem comes in, of how he is going to be introduced among people who are competing with him for the job. It is a science; it is an art, too. I think a reliance on normal personnel practice is your only answer.

CAPTAIN HAYES: I am thinking of the management aspects of it, which are what we are interested in.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1888

MR. ROSS: I would say this, if you will let me go back to my personal experience: I did not know Negroes intimately until I was in an organization where there were 60 of them with whom I worked during office hours day after day. I found no difficulty, indeed, I found satisfaction in that association. I came to know Negroes fairly well, yet I wonder whether any white person can appreciate how deeply Negroes feel about discrimination, and how strong is their temptation to react aggressively.

It shows up particularly when you take a field hand away from strong restrictions and put him up North. He pushes his way through trolley cars, he is aggressive. People damn the whole Negro race because they see some Negroes doing that sort of thing. But treated as human beings, Negroes themselves will not countenance having a Negro push his weight around simply because he is a Negro. The top Negro leaders, such as Lester Granger of the Urban League, are sound and sensible citizens. They worry more about Negroes appearing to good advantage than do the white critics.

During the war Negroes had an organization designed to improve the manners of Negro workers in relation to others. They realize it is a problem. We realize it is a problem. We have to meet it together.

CAPTAIN HAYES: I am interested in this problem as much as you are, sir. That's why I am discussing it at such length. Would you care to comment on the possibility of more white interest or white leadership in the colored problem?

MR. ROSS: I am 100 percent for it. I think there is far too little association on the plane of doing things together between white leaders and Negro leaders. There is a standoffishness. It is particularly apparent in the South. I have lived in the South more of my adult years than I have lived in the North. I have seen in the last five years since I have been in Miami--it is not a particularly southern city, but there is a lot of southern spirit there--I have seen the coming together of Negroes and whites on common problems. I have seen people who 20 years ago were leaders in the Ku Klux Klan ashamed of themselves for that attitude when they come to know the decent, responsible Negro leader.

It is fresh. It is a good thought. Forget the social plane, but on the plane of working together, it is good. That is why I think these community councils are excellent means for white people to get to know Negroes, and vice versa.

QUESTION: Prejudice and the reduction of it seem to be a matter of education, as you mentioned. You also mentioned that there are groups throughout the country on a local community basis working toward the reduction of prejudice. Do you think there can be any added impetus

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1889

given, on either a Federal or a national level, by whatever means the Federal Government has at hand, by either education or legislation, or by any other means, to enhance the program being done on the local level?

MR. ROSS: I do, sir. There was a bill introduced in the last Congress to subsidize that kind of council, the money to be spent locally. I don't think it had a chance of getting through. I think it would have been very useful. The Federal Government could indeed do a lot if it would and it should.

COLONEL BARNES: I have a question I would like to ask here, Mr. Ross, with the class's permission. It comes back to the specific import on economic mobilization of this whole minority-group question. It seems to me that your explanation of what happened in World War II, when compared with the conditions that exist today regarding the labor market, sort of writes it off as a present problem. I come to that view for this reason: Your experience showed that in World War II where we had a lot of competition for jobs, along with prevailing resistance to the hiring of Negroes--that in spite of that opposition, we came out under the Administration's policy with a higher percentage of Negroes in the labor force than the population ratio of colored to white.

MR. ROSS: Not over-all, Colonel. It was about 10 percent, when you take the Mexican-Americans and Negroes, at the peak.

COLONEL BARNES: Let's say it was roughly equivalent to the population ratio. That is what we accomplished in the face of those obstacles. Now we are entering another mobilization. If we do, we enter it under circumstances where we have a tight labor market. It seems to me that competition would not exist, that we would be more inclined to want the Negroes rather than not want them. As a force involving a detriment to economic mobilization, it seems to me it would not again exist.

MR. ROSS: Certainly, we ought to have each other's thinking on that. It may be that I have given an oversimplification and too much of a glowing picture of what the Negroes and other minority groups did during the war. It is the underutilization which is the key to it. You had a need for skilled workers that wasn't really met. The Negro had not had that kind of training. A Negro kid in the South does not fiddle with machinery. The white boy does. When that Negro boy comes to be 18, he has only a small chance to become a mechanic. He is untrained and he goes through life being untrained.

If we need higher skills in production, in possible mobilization, we ought to start now training the capable Negroes--and many of them are capable. We ought to give these capable ones a good, basic

RESTRICTED

grounding in skills, the assumption being that America produces well because of the individual productive capacity of the American worker. But I don't think you have to look far to realize that in the South the white workers are the ones who have the craft jobs, the skill jobs. It doesn't stand to reason that all white southern workers are as capable as some of the untrained but potentially top-skill workers among the Negroes.

Suppose you had a mobilization. What I said about the last war is that we had to employ women, housewives, adolescents, draft rejects. That is a poor working force. If among the 15 million Negroes in this country all the capable ones were given their chance for training, it would lift the productive capacity of the country and release people to the armed services and without disturbing family life by having the mother of three kids go into the war plant to do a very inefficient job.

QUESTION: You mentioned that there is a great resurrection of the feeling of the Bill of Rights, of the rights of individuals. You also mentioned that great strides have been made in the recognition of those rights by industrial management and the armed forces. It seems to me in those two elements they have just practiced good, common sense. I wonder, since our churches and religion seem to put a great premium on individual rights, what our churches are doing. Why are they lagging behind industry and the armed forces?

MR. ROSS: I regret to say I think they are.

COMMENT: Your point seems to be contradictory.

MR. ROSS: In what sense?

COMMENT: The Bill of Rights and religion, it seems to me, ought to be the leaders.

MR. ROSS: I think it is on the conscience of a good many church people. Different denominations have knocked down some racial barriers but the actual bringing of Negroes into mixed congregations has not taken place very much.

Any move in this field is likely to be attacked and it is likely to be attacked on that easy charge of communism. I can give you an example. In the last couple of months in Miami a professional, belonging to an organization that is doing this all over the country, came to Miami and got the use of radio and newspapers to attack Communists in the churches. I don't think there are any Communists among the pulpits of Miami, but, by using the air, getting radio time and what not, he raised a terrific furor there.

RESTRICTED

1051

That brought up a very dangerous doctrine which was aimed at the liberal wing of the Methodist Church, which has come out for integration in the churches of Negroes. The policy being propounded is that good Methodists should insist that the Church do nothing but stick to its spiritual aims and should keep out of problems of that kind--if you don't, you are a Communist. I think that is a dangerous doctrine because it would ban all social thought in the churches, and you don't know whether the real Communist is supporting the doctrine for his own reasons.

QUESTION: The Federal Government has a practical problem in handling Negro employees. I have known this to occur several times--in one specific instance the Negro employee was actually incompetent--and there are incompetent employees in the Federal Government, as no doubt you have heard. When the time comes to discharge such an employee and he happens to be colored, he should be discharged on the basis of lack of ability--inability to perform his job. The minute we attempt to discharge him, a half-dozen organizations rush forward and demand expensive hearings and expensive reviews, often to the extent of taking his case before the court, and so on, because of his color. It is a very discouraging experience, and the personnel managers that have that experience usually go away from that type of thing with the hope that they won't have to hire a colored person again.

This brings me to a statement by Dr. Ralph Bunche before Howard University a few days ago. He stated that certain Negro organizations and groups have a vested interest in segregation in this country. He implied that those Negro organizations and groups that do have such a vested interest are going to have to change their ways. I would like you to comment on that.

MR. ROSS: I would pay great heed and respect to anything Ralph Bunche said. You really have two questions there. As to the specific problem of the incompetent employee, I recognize it is a toothache. I would say give a man like that all the recourse for hearings and so forth that anybody, white or Negro, would have, and fire him if he is proved incompetent. Ralph Bunche would respect firm action in firing that employee after giving him his due recourse.

Now, the fact that those situations face us--and what Ralph Bunche says about vested interest is true--is a reflection of all our past unhappy experience of living at odds with each other, black and white. The Negro newspaper, for instance, gets small advertising, so it must get readers by being militant, going off the deep end, trying to fight the cause of its people by accenting the things that divide the races.

Underneath it all, I think, there is a tremendous feeling which we don't appreciate in Negroes, that they resent being repressed and so are going to fight it out any way they can. It is something we have to live with and understand. After all, we white people created it.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

1892

COLONEL BARTLETT: This will bring it home. There is a principle in law that you can't go into a court with dirty hands. How can the Federal Government take the lead in this sort of thing when we have one of the best cases in the country of segregation right here in Washington? Do you see any hopes for relief of that situation?

MR. ROSS: I think the President has spoken in that regard. I presume he means to take action. I would hope he would. It would certainly set an example for the rest of the country.

We haven't gone into the foreign influences of this thing. I think we need to appreciate them. I think we all realize how deeply the colored peoples of the world feel about racial discrimination in our country. Sumner Welles in a meeting with Hitler before we got into the war was talking on just this point, and Hitler flaunted our racial difficulties in Welles's face. Welles's answer, and I think it was the only one he could make, was that Hitler's national policy was prodiscrimination against Jews, and our national policy was against discrimination of any particular citizen. I think we will be stronger in the face of the world if we do a little more implementing of that policy. I think we have it; I think we are devoted to it; but our weak spots are rather glaring.

ADMIRAL HAGUE: I would like to make a comment. This is brought about by the case which was mentioned, because I have had considerable experience in the civilian-personnel field in military service. One of the great difficulties is that because a thing is difficult we frequently drop it. That is a general indictment--I am sorry--which I must make of the military as I know it, and I don't doubt that it is found throughout the Federal Government.

There was a case where a man was incompetent and it was about in order to fire him. He was a colored man and immediately started screaming racial discrimination. The commanding officer of that station was not inclined to drop the thing, so he carried out the full-scale hearing. Furthermore, he took advantage of it to widen the scope of the inquiry and the right of the individual to an inquiry, and as to whether there was any discrimination in this situation whatsoever.

That case finally went to FEPC after you left, Mr. Ross, and it is now used by the FEPC as a fine example of the way a situation can be handled. Needless to say, the handling of that case by a Rear Admiral didn't hurt the Navy, and the snapper on the story is that the Rear Admiral was born and raised in Mobile, Alabama.

COLONEL BARNES: On behalf of the college I thank you for this frank and informative presentation.

MR. ROSS: Thank you, Colonel.

20

(10 June 1953--250)S/ibc

RESTRICTED