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ENLISTMENT OF MEN OF COLORED RACE (201)

ADMIRAL SEXTON: This morning we are having a hearing on the general subject of enlistment of men of the colored race in other than messman branch.

Among the several papers forwarded to the Board was a report of a committee of which Captain Whiting was the senior member, I believe. It was dated December 21, in which it was set out quite clearly to a certain extent the reasons against the enlistment of colored persons, so unless there is something further, I should say that that would probably cover the reasons against it. So that what the Board must do as regards the directive from the Secretary of the Navy is to suggest a plan for taking into the Navy 5,000 men of the colored race not in the messman branch. Admiral Snyder will conduct the hearing.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: I would like to supplement Admiral Sexton's remarks in emphasizing that (suggesting a plan) again. Regardless of what any officer may feel about it, we couldn't have a more comprehensive report setting forth the history, the disadvantages and the undesirability which has been the Navy's experience for many years, but I do wish to emphasize that the directive states the General Board is requested to "give immediate attention to the problem of enlistment in the Navy, in other than the messman branch, of men of the colored race." It doesn't state directly that we are not to give arguments against it but the implication is plain that a possible suggestion is wanted; for it is supplemented by "The Secretary of the Navy desires that the General Board submit to him at an early date a suggested plan for taking into the Navy 5,000 men of the colored race, not in the messman

branch, stating their idea as to the type of duty, assignment, etc." In some of these papers there is mentioned that perhaps special ratings might serve to enable the service to take in these men. It states "which will permit the Navy to best utilize the services of these men." These papers, the Special Board submitted December 24, of which Captain Whiting was the president, and then there was a minority report.

CAPTAIN WHITING: I have that to submit today,

ADMIRAL SNYDER: We are fully conversant with that. I merely take the time to emphasize the points above to save your time and ours. We are largely conversant with the history of this subject; and, with our long and varied service in the Navy, and we are pretty fully acquainted with all the surrounding circumstances. Those reports are supplemented by numerous recent letters. It may be of interest to you to know that we have quite a recent letter from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People protesting also the discrimination, which they stated to be a fact, against the reception of blood donors. That was answered by the Surgeon General of the Navy, stating that there has been no exception made, that the Navy had received these donations of blood and stated that there was no distinction between the plasma of any race and the white race. This is just a side light showing the pressure apparently being brought to bear upon higher authorities is becoming more and more intensive. Of course, if we are to take 5,000 colored men into the service, - and we will discuss it, - we don't want to pass insuperable difficulties to the Service; but, before we listen to you, I thought it might be helpful to give a few notes we have been able to glean from these papers.

In the first place, if 5,000 are to be taken into the naval service, it would seem that possibly the Marine Corps could take care of 20% or 1,000; and perhaps the Coast Guard could take care of a certain number, say 500 or more. In the points that have been brought out in these papers which the Secretary of the Navy sent to the Board, the following features have been stressed. Isn't there some type of duty or some special assignments, or even perhaps some special rating in which we could open this field and which would indicate we are not restricting them to a servant class entirely? They are seeking some methods and bring pressure to bear on this point. They want to come into the service in some other role than the messman branch, which they emphasize is a servant branch. It has been suggested that possibly we might open up the musician branch. The colored race is very musical and they are versed in all forms of rhythm. Possibly that would be an avenue. We must not overlook the question of aviation. The question of taking them into general service and into aviation is comparable of course to enlistment for any duties in the line of the fighting branches. But someone made the remark -- I don't know whether you received any incidental information on that question, Admiral Sexton -

but someone stated the Army has some in aviation and they have proved quite successful. Admiral Horne told me that. But we have

ADMIRAL SEXTON: There is something in the paper this morning about it.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: For instance, in our own aviation service we have patrol planes, and we also need ground crews which might be a fertile field for them. We do know that in past years some of these colored men have been in the Navy, and in the old days, when we used coal, they started generally as coal passers, water tenders, oilers, and some even became machinist's mates. Harking back over past service, I recall very few petty officers of the line, wherein they had charge of other men. When it comes to the Marines, they might consider it to be feasible or possible to have a separate battalion. Of course, there are a great many places in the world where men of this color could not be used, but on the other hand, there are other places where they could be used, as in the West Indies waters. I am just suggesting these things to help you in your thoughts when you give us information and ideas of your own.

When it comes to the Navy proper, we have all sorts of auxiliaries and minor vessels. They might be used on transports. It is very doubtful that you could use them on repair vessels or vessels of the train of that type. You could on store ships, but the tenders, - undoubtedly not, because those men are very highly trained technically, but you possibly could take some in the numerous types of patrol vessels for harbor or sea frontiers, or coastal frontiers. - They might be taken in at some particular station, district, or yard. Any such scheme which might be suggested would involve the creation of training schools. These training schools could be located at some designated yard or station, perhaps two or more. Certain recruiting stations, or a limited number of stations, might be allowed to take them. I don't see why this program could not be, as someone suggested, taken as experimental in a frank effort to develop some definite data as to their adaptability in this era.

Bear in mind, of course, that we stopped the enlistment of colored men in 1922 when we started taking Filipinos as mess attendants; and in 1933 we went back to taking colored people as messmen. But of course this present demand is pointed at removing that restriction of confining them to the messman or servant branch only as I have said before. But certainly in the fields I have outlined, we should find something where possibly there will develop definite data at the present time in regard to their suitability and adaptability. It will be troublesome, and requires tact, patience and tolerance in the training centers; it would introduce



difficulties to the personnel who have charge of these training schools and later have these men under their command. But we have so many difficulties to surmount anyhow that one more possibly wouldn't swell the total very much. Naturally, I think that under the circumstances we should provide for complete segregation where these people are trained. That would bring about criticism, of course, but would at least have to start that way. Some such effort would remove the present restrictions and anything that would alleviate the bitterness and feeling which undoubtedly promotes disunity throughout the country is to be sought. Thinking of the colored race primarily, of course, a great many people will say that political pressure has been brought to bear. We all have our own ideas on that.

That is about as much, after the reading of these papers and thinking it over, that I can suggest along these lines. We will hear from the Bureau of Navigation first.

CAPTAIN WHITING: Admiral Jacobs has a majority and minority report to present and makes this statement:

"There are enclosed herewith copies of the majority and minority reports of a committee of officers and Mr. Addison Walker, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, which by direction of the Secretary of the Navy were submitted recently.

"The Bureau is in full accord with the ideas expressed in the majority report, and is not in accord with those expressed in the minority report."

This negro question extends far beyond the 5,000 mentioned in the instructions from the Secretary of the Navy. This simply an opening wedge. The sponsors of this program desire full equality on the part of the negro, and will not rest content until they obtain it. We may think that we are winning the program if we simply assign these people to construction regiments. Once they get into construction regiments, there will be pressure brought on the Navy Department to put them in small patrol vessels. The next step will be cargo vessels. Finally, you will have them in every man-of-war in direct proportion to the population - about 11%.

You may believe the Recruiting Service, by regulation, increasing standards, etc., can keep them out. The negro is an obedient soul, and when he is directed to report to a recruiting station by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, he will do so. An example of this is the fact that the Association is advising the negroes not to enlist in the Navy, and in consequence, we are short on mess attendants and are having a hard time getting them.

For the last twenty years, the Bureau of Navigation has endeavored, by raising the standards of its men, to keep step with the tremendous advances made by science which, in turn, have produced highly improved vessels. Except for a very few months just previous to the war, there was always maintained a waiting list of men who desired to enter the Naval Service.

I might add that since the war started we have enlisted 84,000 men.

The parents of these boys have been thoroughly propagandized that they were going to associate with men of their own caliber, and the Recruiting Service has endeavored to raise both the intelligence and physical standards. During the depression I was on recruiting duty, and very few men left my station whose intelligence test was less than 78% or 80%, whereas 80% is considered sufficient for a plebe at the Naval Academy. These men who enlisted eleven years ago are today the chief petty officers in the Navy. We have constantly raised our standards. We have increased schools. The minute the negro is introduced into general service, and we should not consider anything else because it is going to be forced upon us if we accept anything, the high type of man that we have been getting for the last twenty years will go elsewhere and we will get the type of man who will lie in bed with a negro.

I have not mentioned anything in regard to creating dissension on board ship, because the General Board is well aware of the results that will quickly follow by accepting the negro. When Admiral Richardson was Commander-in-Chief, it was necessary for him to issue a confidential memorandum to the officers in connection with handling the negro. Many white men do not know how to handle them, and if the officers must be cautioned, what is going to happen below decks?

I plead with the General Board to recommend, in the most forceful manner, only to take members of the negro race in the messman branch and to declare any other plan undesirable.

I wish to read a letter to the Secretary of the Navy from a Congressman. (Reads as follows:)

"I am just this morning in receipt of form letter and enclosure from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People which letter and enclosure I am herewith transmitting to you. These documents relate to the rejection by the Navy of a certain Harold J. Franklin. While this association criticizes you for discriminating against negroes, I noticed that you state that you were not discriminating. I have no objection to your statement, provided you do not



carry out the wishes of this Association.

"In this hour of national crisis, it is much more important that we have the full-hearted cooperation of the thirty million white southern Americans than that we satisfy the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. I realize that you have never lived in the South. I have lived there all my life. You know that our people have volunteered for military service more readily than the people of any other section of the Nation. If they be forced to serve with Negroes, they will cease to volunteer; and when drafted, they will not serve with that enthusiasm and high morale that has always characterized the soldiers and sailors of the southern states.

"I do not mean to urge a complete seclusion of Negroes from military or naval service, but I do most earnestly plead with you to see that there is a complete segregation of the races. To assign a Negro doctor to treat some southern white boy would be a crushing insult and in my opinion, an outrage against the patriotism of our southern people."

His statement is borne out by the facts if we include the western part of our nation which has a racial problem of its own. I will put these in the record, but for the month of December the enlistment per 100,000 were the highest in the following cities: I will read the top twenty - Portland, Oregon; Seattle; Los Angeles; San Diego; San Francisco; Springfield, Mass.; Denver; Salt Lake City; Des Moines; Baltimore; Houston; Indianapolis; Kansas City; Cincinnati; Richmond; Birmingham; Detroit - that is the first northern city; Dallas; Oklahoma City; Macon. For the previous month before war was declared the top twenty were: Portland; San Diego; San Francisco; Seattle; Los Angeles; Richmond; Birmingham; Denver; Salt Lake City; Des Moines; Macon; Houston; Detroit; Cincinnati; Raleigh; Nashville; Kansas City; Indianapolis; St. Louis; Omaha; Little Rock; Springfield. The reason, in my opinion, that caused Springfield to jump is that we spent a lot of money there last year for advertising. That city had a type of Community Chest drive organized, and the minute war was declared, the Community Chest jumped in and helped out.

That is all I have to say except that I plead with the General Board to recommend only taking negro men in the messman branch.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: That is not what we are required to do, whether we like it or not. Of course, if the Bureau of Navigation has no plan —

CAPTAIN WHITING: No, sir, but Captain Badt will take that up. I represent the recruiting problem. My statement is my own opinion as from time to time Director of Recruiting. I was associated once with the General Board and it declined to go beyond certain limitations. That was in the first Limitation of Armaments Conference. Captain Badt has the plans.

CAPTAIN BADT: In the first instance, in regard to enlisting negroes for crews on patrol or other small vessels, the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation has decided he does not desire to do so. The reasons are set forth in the majority board report. In order to qualify negroes for such duty, it would require that white Chief Petty Officers and petty officers be assigned to these vessels to train newly enlisted negroes for petty officer ratings and for the various duties on board these vessels. In the past it has taken several years to train and qualify an enlisted man for petty officer ratings. The minimum length of service for Chief Petty Officers being 6 years - four months. The average length of service for a Chief Petty Officer would probably be twelve or thirteen years. This length of service requirement has now been reduced to a minimum of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years, and to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years for petty officer, first class. Therefore, it can be seen that it would take several years of intensive training in order to obtain a competent crew of negroes who could be depended upon to man patrol or other small vessels without supervision. In the meantime, the vessels would not be efficient operating units and the white petty officers required for training on these vessels could well be used to man the rapidly expanding Navy. In this connection I might add that we are short on the first of January approximately 20,000 petty officers. Replacements for negro members of the crews must also be taken into account.

If these new men are to be processed through training stations then it may be necessary to consider the question of separate barracks, messes, etc., and the additional expense involved.

Now in regard to general service, the Chief of the Bureau does not want to enlist negroes for general service. If the Navy must take negroes, then it is suggested that they be enlisted for negro construction battalions. Construction battalions of white enlisted men are now being enlisted, therefore there can be no claim of color partiality as the negroes would be enlisted in the various required ratings also as non rated men, if they can qualify.

We now have a circular letter in regard to the enlistment in construction battalions in Class V-6 of the Naval Reserve. We have had word from the Bureau of Yards and Docks that, if the Navy must take negroes, they would be willing to try out a negro battalion. That is just an opening to get into general service, as Captain Whiting said. These construction battalions are for advanced base duties and things like that.



ADMIRAL SNYDER: They would have combatant duties if they got caught like they did out in Wake and Midway.

CAPTAIN BADT: They are going to places like that in battalions and of course some of these ratings include all the way from seaman on up to Chief Petty Officer. They also include officers, stewards, cooks, mess attendants, etc.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: Do you give them a special rating?

CAPTAIN BADT: No, they are enlisted in Class V-6 of the Naval Reserve.

CAPTAIN WHITING: They get the rating for which they qualify.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: Do you use the same naval titles?

CAPTAIN BADT: Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN WHITING: The chainman would be a seaman, second class; a clerk would be a yeoman rating; a draftsman architect would be a carpenter's mate; electrical mechanics are draftsmen; structural steel mechanics would be shipfitters; a gunner's mate would be gunner's mate; and possible hospital and mess attendants and pharmacists and photographers.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Have you any idea of what the possibility of getting negroes in ratings would be?

CAPTAIN WHITING: For this project?

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Yes.

CAPTAIN WHITING: I think it would be difficult. You would get all the lower ratings.

CAPTAIN BADT: I was talking to an officer in Yards and Docks and he said it was very difficult to get draftsmen.

CAPTAIN PENCE: If we got them would they be discharged at the end of the war?

CAPTAIN BADT: We would not keep them. They are reserves. Construction companies require blacksmiths, carpenters, concrete workers, coppersmiths, deckhands, divers, drillers, electricians, crane helpers, engine helpers, labor foremen, laborers, launchmen, mechanics, metalsmiths, oilers, shovel operators, painters, pipefitters, pipemen, powdermen (blasting), etc.



ADMIRAL SEXTON: You say you don't think you could get the ratings you want?

CAPTAIN WHITING: By supplementing them with whites you could do it. You would have a mixed battalion. You have to accept it. There is no use fooling ourselves. This is my opinion, Admiral, - if you accept the colored man you are going to have in general service before the year is up. The next step is obvious. You can try this. It is only a thousand or 1200.

CAPTAIN BADT: They would be segregated as negro construction companies, battalions, etc.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Those are the only suggestions?

CAPTAIN BADT: Yes, sir.

CAPTAIN WHITING: I might add that these naval battalions started out to be 3,000 strong, and by the time we get 3,000 we will want 10,000 and when we get 10,000 we will want 30,000. Every time I get to a given point I am just so much further behind. The 10,000 letter was signed yesterday. By the time we get 10,000 we will want 30,000.

CAPTAIN BADT: If you are forced to take this, there is no prejudice or partiality shown to any color because you are also going to have white construction companies.

CAPTAIN WHITING: We already have them.

CAPTAIN BADT: If these people, the negroes, are so good they should be able to find men who will enlist who are qualified for all of these ratings.

CAPTAIN WHITING: That is not going to satisfy them.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: It is an opening wedge, but it is something beyond the servant class. Whether we agree with you or not, we are seeking some suggestion for it.

CAPTAIN BADT: What effect it is going to have on enlistments for white construction companies is to be seen.

CAPTAIN WHITING: We have been getting a very great response to white construction battalions. We filled it up at first in about a week or ten days.

CAPTAIN BADT: I understood one was going to Midway.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Are they given any military training at all?

CAPTAIN WHITING: Training station for three weeks, then we evacuate them from the training stations and have arranged to obtain the loan of ten or twelve N.Y.A. camps where they will have physical instruction and military training and drill until their barracks are completed some time in March in Norfolk, and go back there for a further six weeks' course in learning how to operate as a team. There are about 1200 to a team.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Don't you teach them how to shoot a gun?

CAPTAIN WHITING: No more than what they can learn in three weeks, but when the training period is extended to four, five or eight weeks they will get the advantage of an eight weeks' training period. They will get very little training at present.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: Let us hear what the aviation people have to say.

CAPTAIN RAGSDALE: It would be very difficult if not impossible to carry out any measure of segregation in regard to aviation. Probably the most difficult proposition in the Navy as a whole is as regards to segregation. Each squadron, of course, has to have a measure of experienced petty officers, and it takes a good time to make a petty officer. It would be two or three years in aviation ratings, and until that time it will be necessary for all key billets, particularly officer, to be filled by whites. So you would have a mixture in its purest form. I see no way around it on that basis. We should realize that a large portion of ratings are petty officer ratings. As regards the training program, it presents a particularly difficult set-up in the training of negro pilots or negro mechanics. Pilots go through a routine at an induction center for three months, and it would be impractical to segregate them there because the induction center is designed to handle a 2500 total. I say it wouldn't be impossible, but it would be a difficult proposition.

Then they would go to a reserve aviation base for elimination flight training. They might segregate one or more bases. That would be the simplest phase. From there they would go to Flight Training Schools at Corpus Christi, Miami, Jacksonville and Pensacola. Being located in the south and being large training stations there, it would be in my opinion out of the question to segregate them, and the military phases of pilot training require close cooperation between the whites of the squadrons of the training planes and the instructors. There is a very close contact you can't get away from in the training of the pilots. This would naturally be in a section of the country where it would be most violently opposed and would do the most harm. As regards the training of mechanics, radiomen and metalsmiths, there again it would be a difficult problem in this six months' course of training to segregate whites from the blacks.

CAPTAIN And then when they go out in the patrol squadron until such time as they could be made into petty officers, of course, approximately two years, it would be necessary for white petty officers to supervise them in the squadron. That of course would bring about a difficult position if a negro pilot took a partial white crew in the air. He would be in command of the plane and of the crew. In addition, of course, there is the general phase of aviators exercising command functions at a much younger age and lower bracket than other branches of the service, and in this capacity of cooperation with the ground forces or surface forces and all, it would undoubtedly present some very awkward situations. That is all I have to say on the general proposition.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: How does the Army handle it, do you know?

CAPTAIN RAGSDALE: No, sir.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: I know they have some negro pilots.

CAPTAIN RAGSDALE: I can see where they could handle it to very much less disadvantage than would obtain in our case.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: I would think they would have to start in about the same way.

CAPTAIN RAGSDALE: Yes, sir. I think they took them in only about a year or so ago.

CAPTAIN WHITING: Not quite that long, Admiral. I think it was about eight or nine months ago.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Do you know about it?

CAPTAIN WHITING: No, sir. They enlisted a negro in an airplane located in Times Square and sent him to Mineola to start out. They had a big spread in the papers. It was a publicity stunt.

CAPTAIN RAGSDALE: I think it would be more difficult to carry out a measure of segregation in aviation than almost any other branch you could think of.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: When I mentioned they could be segregated that is not a sine qua non of this business. It is just one of the suggestions in the attempt to alleviate this situation that would be contemplated. Of course there is no doubt but what any segregation would be resisted just the same. Pressure will immediately come on that. But it is a question as to whether we can find a field where we can start and use that as one of the measures of segregation while we are making the start. That is what they want, -- some suggestions.



CAPTAIN RAGSDALE: In the highly technical phases of aviation it is, I believe, more technical than most of the ratings. I doubt if they could assimilate enough of this technical information to make much progress.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: In this minority report he suggests that.

CAPTAIN WHITING: Yes, but the second paragraph of the directive doesn't say that at all. It is a very cleverly worded paragraph.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: I got this informally but I was told that the Army thought very well of these people they had taken in in aviation.

CAPTAIN RAGSDALE: I don't know about that picture of it.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: I got that second or third hand. They were very much pleased with it.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: A naval aviator told us that. I heard it at the same time. They were very much pleased with them.

CAPTAIN WHITING: I would take all of that with a grain of salt.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: That is just hearsay.

CAPTAIN RAGSDALE: In time of war with possibility of seniority in the air changing very rapidly due to attrition, you might well find them exercising command over portions of squadrons. It would be a difficult thing to keep them out of command as a matter of fact.

CAPTAIN WHITING: One of my duties in the Bureau of Navigation is to watch the editorials, especially of the negro papers, and the untimate aims of the negro is to man the battleships, 11% of the cruisers and 11% of the destroyers, etc. That is their goal.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: What would happen if we took a gunboat of a rather simple type? What I had in mind was something like the PADUCAH, and put white officers and white petty officers on board, with negro deckhands and fill all the lower ratings with colored.

CAPTAIN WHITING: If a colored man got sick you would have to replace him with a colored man.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Yes, I know, but I am asking how it would work on board ship.

CAPTAIN WHITING: You know just as much about the workings of a ship as I do, and probably more, sir. I have been brought up by Admiral Snyder. Captain Pence had something to do with me, too.

CAPTAIN BADT: I think when the negro gets to be a petty officer he will be a petty officer in name only and will not exercise authority. They segregate themselves. That has been my experience with the negro petty officer.

CAPTAIN WHITING: I think one thing we lose track of is that the ship today is an entirely different piece of machinery than when we served in the DELAWARE. Back in the DELAWARE days, - she was a coal burner and her turrets were hand loading, - we did not care much about the mind. All we had to have was a strong back. Today everything is mechanical and electrical, and you need a different type of man on board than twenty-five years ago. We had 280 to 300 pounds steam pressure then. Now we are up to 600 or 800 pounds.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Do you happen to know how far negroes go in their various trades?

CAPTAIN WHITING: They have negro colleges.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Yes, I know. Do they have negro technical colleges, - engineering, electrical?

CAPTAIN WHITING: I would have to investigate. In the north the negro has the right to go to the same school as the whites.

GENERAL HOLCOMB: The University of California has negroes.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: Let us ask General Holcomb about this.

GENERAL HOLCOMB: If I may suggest, I would like to have Colonel Watson give you his views. He has prepared them. I did not expect to be able to be here.

COLONEL WATSON: (Reads as follows:)

"With reference to the suggestion that particular attention be given to the possibility of utilizing about 1,000 negroes as enlisted men in the Marine Corps, organized into a separate battalion or other unit, the following comments are submitted:

(a) There is no necessity for enlisting negroes to meet the personnel requirements of the Marine Corps based on the Liberty program. The number of white men desiring to enlist exceeds the facilities immediately available.

(b) A separate battalion as organized under our present tables of organization would consist of 34 section officers and 382 enlisted men. Of the enlisted men 179 are non-commissioned officers who must have qualities of leadership, courage, and the technical and tactical knowledge required for the duties to be performed. Negro non-commissioned officers for such a unit would not be available for from 6 months to 1 year after the enlistment of negroes commenced.

(c) The present bottlenecks on enlistments above 104,000 men is housing and military equipment. As rapidly as these deficiencies can be corrected it is intended to ask authority for the enlistment of about 46,000 men in order to reach 150,000, which is the number of Marines required for the Liberty Program. It is believed that, in any event, negroes should not be enlisted until 150,000 men at least are obtained.

(d) The enlistment of 1,000 negroes in the Marine Corps will be a slow process for the following reasons:

(1) The first negroes to be enlisted and trained should be cooks.

(2) Separate housing must be provided and a place to establish such housing located, purchased or leased.

(3) Equipment must be provided.

(4) Additional funds must be authorized.

(e) The assignment of specially selected regular officers and non-commissioned officers will have to be made at a time when their services cannot be spared from units of the Fleet Marine Force, or other activities.

(f) In the event that it is finally determined negroes must be enlisted in the Marine Corps, it is considered that they should be enlisted in Class V, Volunteer Marine Corps Reserve, for general duty in preference to being assigned to any particular unit.

(g) The enlisted personnel of the Marine Corps live together, work together, and associate together on liberty. The men have pride in their organization and in their ability to perform their duties. Their morale is high. It is doubtful if their present



associations and morale will be enhanced by the injection of negro marines in the Marine Corps."

GENERAL HOLCOMB: I have three or four more or less disconnected thoughts I would like to leave with the General Board. We are all familiar with the fact that there has been a good deal of German propaganda in connection with our treatment of the negro race. Personally, I cannot believe that the Germans are ignorant of the fact that one of the principal complaints of the negro outside of his liability to be lynched is that there are certain places he is not allowed to go; and one of them is the Naval Service. Nor can I make myself believe that the Germans would launch this propaganda if they thought they were making available to the service a useful and efficient source of man power.

To take negroes into the Marine Corps at this time or within six months or possibly a year would be absolutely tragic. We haven't the housing, the clothing or equipment, to take the white men, a race which has proven efficient in war, who want to come in. They are trying to force themselves in. We can't meet the demands. Soon we are going to have to stop our recruiting program. We are getting a thousand men a day. I would like simply to repeat, because it is so very important, the thought Colonel Watson expressed, the drain on our trained personnel involved in organizing negro units. We are operating the Marine Corps now on regular personnel appropriate for 30,000. We have nearly 90,000 men. We are making it up with retired officers - a relatively small source - and reserve officers. We can not use any but the best type of officer on this project because it will take a great deal of character and technique to make the thing a success, and if it is forced on us we must make it a success.

The situation with respect to the non-commissioned officers in the Marine Corps is still more serious. It takes a long time to make a good non-commissioned officer and they are spread terribly thin. It would mean taking out of the Fleet Marine Force the type of non-commissioned officer that we will have to have in order to train the negro contingents at a time when they simply cannot be spared if we are going to be ready for immediate service to the fleet.

Admiral Snyder referred to one possibility of using negro troops in the West Indies. I know that was just a thought that came into his mind and wasn't intended to be taken too literally. But in answer to that I would like to say that that is definitely one place where negroes could not be used, as we who have served a long time among those people know. They simply will not have negroes there. If you want to sabotage the good-will program, that is the way to do it. Down among the Latins so many of them are white men only by their own rules.

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ADMIRAL SEXTON: Does that apply to South America as well?

GENERAL HOLCOMB: I think so. We know it in the part of Latin America in which we have served. One administration sent a negro official to Haiti with dire results.

Here is another thought brought out by Captain Whiting, but it is so important I would like to dwell on it. We are now fighting a crucial battle. If we are defeated we must not close our eyes to the fact that once in they will be strengthened in their effort to force themselves into every activity we have. If they are not satisfied to be messmen, they will not be satisfied to go into the construction or labor battalions. Don't forget the colleges are turning out a large number of well educated negroes. I don't know how long we will be able to keep them out of the V-7 class. I think not very long.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: What is the V-7 class?

CAPTAIN WHITING: Line officers who are college graduates. It is a four months' course.

GENERAL HOLCOMB: We have promotion from the ranks and we must keep it up because it is a very fine source of officer material in war.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: You don't have anything comparable to V-7?

GENERAL HOLCOMB: We call it the candidates class. We give them four month's training as enlisted men and four months as reserve officers and then they go to the field forces.

CAPTAIN WHITING: I might add that the same thing applies to aviation cadets. We have an aviation cadet program where a man must have only two years of college and pass a physical examination. In our other program, - the V-7, - the man must be a college graduate but we accept him in his Junior year and permit him to continue his education until he graduates. The colleges are going to continue this summer and not recess as they have heretofore.

GENERAL HOLCOMB: Colonel Watson in effect asks that if we are compelled to take the negro that how we use him be left for further study. In an infantry battalion is the very last place they would be put. There is no branch of the service that requires more character and a higher degree of morale than the infantry, which, in the end, settles the battle no matter what else happens; the man with a knife on the end of a stick. The infantry battalion is a very highly technical organization. You may know it takes very very much longer to train an infantry battalion for combat than an artillery battalion.

As Commandant of the Marine Corps I would like to say this is not a new question with me. I have thought of it for years and have talked it over and I know I speak not only for myself but for all the officers I know, that we believe there would be a definite loss of efficiency in the Marine Corps if we had to take negroes; and it seems to me at a time like this, when the country is fighting for its life, any step which will reduce efficiency is unjustifiable. I hope very much that the General Board, if it agrees with the views expressed by the Bureau of Navigation and Marine Corps, will see its way clear to stating that no plan can be made for the employment of negroes in the Naval Service that will not serve to reduce the efficiency of that service.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: Has the Coast Guard any ideas?

COMMANDER SPENCER: Our problems have been stated by the gentlemen who have spoken before. They are the same, perhaps enhanced somewhat by the fact that our units are small and contacts between the men are bound to be closer. We feel the problem has got to be faced. While we are not anxious to take on any additional problems at this time, if we have to we will take some of them.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Have you any now?

COMMANDER SPENCER: Yes, sir.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: In what ratings?

COMMANDER SPENCER: One lighthouse station is manned entirely by negroes, and there are a few on one of the tenders used on the Mississippi River. We have boatswain's mates, seamen, machinist's mates, water tenders, firemen.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Individually, how do they perform their duties?

COMMANDER SPENCER: Most of them are still new to us. We took them in when we took over the lighthouse service. Those at the stations, as far as the performance of their duties is concerned have been satisfactory. They do require a little closer supervision than the other stations to see that they keep their material and cleanliness up to standard.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Is a negro in charge?

COMMANDER SPENCER: Yes, sir. Four boatswain's mates, first class. We had only one, but recently three became boatswain's mates, so it increased those. All men who had 16 years' service became first class.



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GENERAL HOLCOMB: I have one other thought and that is that the negro race has every opportunity now to satisfy its aspirations for combat, in the Army - a very much larger organization than the Navy or Marine Corps, - and their desire to enter the naval service is largely, I think, to break into a club that doesn't want them. I know the higher command has to think of political considerations, and I don't mean questions of policies, but politics. It seems to me a question like this should be settled on military considerations and not on other considerations.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: If you had to take them, what would you do?

GENERAL HOLCOMB: I don't want to take another licking; if we have to take them we will give them every type of duty and do that rather than be defeated again.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: You would not attempt segregation?

GENERAL HOLCOMB: I would not put them in any white unit but I would rather put them in every activity than be licked again. There is a pioneer battalion which they might fit into. They will not stop at that. They will demand service on board ship; my thought is that probably we would have to let them have it. For those that really want fighting we could organize a parachute battalion and other activities like that.

ADMIRAL SNYDER: What about the musicians I suggested? Could we open up that field to them?

CAPTAIN BADT: I don't think so. There is not much difference in that from the general service.

CAPTAIN RAGSDALE: I would like to say, my sentiments that I have expressed have the approval of Admiral Towers. In my opinion it seems to me that aviation is probably one of the last places in the Navy we could use the colored race to advantage. There is little chance for segregation and more chance to exercise individual authority over mixed units than in any other branch.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Captain Denfeld, you came in late. Is there anything you want to say?

CAPTAIN DENFELD: I have nothing further to add. Captain Whiting has more to say about this than I.

ADMIRAL SEXTON: Thank you very much, gentlemen.