HARRY S. TRUMAN AND REVIVAL OF

THE CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE

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HARRY S. TRUMAN AND REVIVAL OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE

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PREFACE

The "tumult and the shouting" occasioned by the reading of President Truman's Civil Rights Message to Congress on February 2, 1948, has not died. In some areas the protests of certain members of Congress and their constituents who charged that it was an outrage can still be heard. But they have lost volume and the reverberations are weaker. The shouts of other minorities were strong in approval and filled with hope. The majority of the populace simply listened and pondered or ignored it as people often do in a republic.

Many citizens were aware, however, that a potent package had been bundled and delivered by Harry S. Truman, the Democratic President from Missouri. That has long been remembered and it will not be soon forgotten. It was an

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1 Congressional Record, 80th Congress, 2nd Session, XCIV, Part 1, 927-929.


unprecedented, peacetime attempt of a president to implement by federal law the rights of individuals guaranteed in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

A study of the part President Truman played is important, for a role of some type must be accepted by every American President in the surging drama of civil rights for all Americans. In his recent study of presidential concern with civil liberties, Richard P. Longaker wrote: "... where once presidential involvement with Constitutional rights was brief and intermittent it is now direct, inevitable and enduring."

Truman assumed his place as champion of the common people with a dedication he ascribed to historical obligation. Discussing his decision to run for office in 1948, he said:

Down through the history of the presidency of the United States a succession of strong liberal Presidents had fought the fight for liberalism and for a better life for the common man: Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt. With such a heritage handed down to me, I could not reject lightly the opportunity and the responsibility which were mine in 1948. I had to make a fight for its continuation.

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Many factors and events preceding and during the Truman Administration will be examined in this attempt to determine the motivation and make an evaluation of his civil rights program.

First consideration will be given to background forces such as early attempts to utilize Constitutional civil liberties, Supreme Court decisions and organized movements, Discrimination and suppression of minority groups, with their protests and appeals, made an impact of importance and demand attention. The long years of the Franklin D. Roosevelt presidency, 1932-1945, with its recurrent pressures for civil rights reforms left inevitable problems for his successor. Indeed, the incursion of civil rights matters during the Truman years of 1945, 1946, and 1947, must be explored to understand the crisis year of 1948. Membership of the President's Committee on Civil Rights 6 and the published report 7 of the committee are also significant component parts of this subject.

An avalanche of criticism and denunciation such as that aroused in the Eightieth Congress by the President's suggested civil rights measures has seldom been equaled in that body.

6 Established by Executive Order No. 9808, December 5, 1946; Federal Register, VII, No. 238, 14153.

7 To Secure These Rights (Washington, 1947).
The resultant struggle in Congress for civil rights legislation without success, and the widespread expressions of public opinion it excited are seen as the main events of the Truman program. It is true, however, that he made perennial recommendations for such legislation through the remainder of his term. They were fruitless but valuable, for much of his program has been enacted in succeeding years—under the Republican Party. Walter Lippman was probably correct when he is quoted as saying Truman's recommendations were "a program for his successors."

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CHAPTER I

STORY WITH A FUTURE

The Truman administration did not coin the phrase "civil rights," though it doubtless was responsible for stirring the American public to the widest discussion of it since the pre-Revolutionary times. That idiom along with "civil liberties" has long been a part of American life and language. Webster defines civil liberty as "exemption from arbitrary governmental interference with person, opinion, or property." On the other hand, civil rights is defined as "United States' rights secured by the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution, and by certain acts of Congress . . . ." These interpretations suggest that Americans have expected their government to safeguard their rights and at the same time demanding that it not interfere with their liberties—a complex objective sometimes difficult to achieve. Its seeking has often kindled wrath and vehement words, but always a dedicated devotion in those who strive for it. That has been the pattern in American democracy since its inception.

Most Americans realize that national ideas and ideals of freedom and equality stemmed from an English heritage.
English colonists as early as Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in his Patent of 1578, were granted wide powers of self government with which to maintain their dearly bought liberties.¹ Historians have said that "... the generation which wrote the Constitution claimed all the fundamental rights of Englishmen, whether achieved before or after the foundations of the several colonies."² Despite those precautions, some of the states were unwilling to ratify the Constitution until assured of a Bill of Rights designed to protect individual rights against the risk of an overpowering government. To this end the first Ten Amendments were added in 1791 as a Bill of Rights to insure the basic principle of the Declaration of Independence that governmental purpose is primarily to preserve the inherent rights of individuals.

Through the years Congress and the federal courts have tried to determine the exact meaning of the provisions of the Bill of Rights. This has occurred because its benefits have not always accrued to all Americans.

Some of the people believing they had been denied those basic rights have sought redress by special effort in various ways. In 1833 Justice John Marshall delivered the opinion

¹Zechariah Chafee, Jr., How Human Rights Got Into the Constitution (Boston, 1952), p. 32.
²Ibid., p. 42.
in a case employing the Fifth Amendment, which concerned the taking of private property for public use. The Supreme Court declared it "applicable solely to limitation of the United States Government and not to the individual legislation of the States." 3 The Court, in 1842, passed on a case testing the validity of the fugitive slave law and declared it constitutional, thus protecting the private property of the slave owner by Amendment V. 4

During and after the tragic years when emotional pitch over sectional differences had brought the Civil War, the President, Congress and the Supreme Court took action to augment civil rights for divers reasons. President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, declaring slaves free in rebellious states, stated it was "warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity." 5 The Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, abolished slavery in the United States. The Republican Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866, over presidential veto, but fearing it might be declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, proposed and

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3 Barron v. City of Baltimore, 7 Peters, 243 (1833).
passed the Fourteenth Amendment. Intended to give citizenship to Negroes, the Amendment also granted it to all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and Congress was empowered to enforce its provisions by appropriate legislation. It was ratified in 1868. The Fifteenth Amendment proposed by Congress in 1868, and ratified in 1870, declared that the right of citizens to vote should not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude, with Congress given the power to enforce it by legislation.

On March 1, 1875, Senator Charles Sumner’s bill became the Civil Rights Act of 1875. The Act guaranteed equal rights in public places and forbade the exclusion of Negroes from jury duty. But in the famous Civil Rights Cases decision of 1883, the Supreme Court declared the 1875 Act unconstitutional, holding that it was not authorized by the Thirteenth Amendment since that applied only to slavery or involuntary servitude, nor by the Fourteenth Amendment which was prohibitive on States only and not on the action of individuals. The five cases included came from Kansas, Missouri, California, New York, and Tennessee respectively.

6 Ibid., p. 251; 18 Stat. 335 (1875).
7 Civil Rights Cases, 109 U. S., 3 (1883).
demonstrating that there were people of color in all sections who complained of being denied equal rights. The suits were filed against inns, or hotels, theatres, and a railroad, where colored persons had been denied accommodations or seats. Only Justice Harlan dissented.

In 1896, the well-known "separate but equal" doctrine was established in the case of a Louisiana Negro riding in a railroad coach reserved for white people. Here again Justice Harlan was the lone dissenter, declaring: "Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens."\(^8\) For years it became a millstone to the numerous cases which sought to end racial segregation in public education. For over a quarter of a century the "separate but equal" formula enforced segregation as, said Justice William O. Douglas: "... it became embedded in the law and practices of many states."\(^9\) In the late 1930's the Supreme Court first broke its hold in connection with professional schools of higher education by upholding the right of a Negro graduate student to attend the Missouri

\(^8\) *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U. S., 537 (1896).

law school. Not until after the advances of the Truman years was the doctrine destroyed by the Warren Court in 1954. 11

Strongest of all minority groups and exerting pressures which came to the forefront in the 1940's were the American Negroes. Although granted citizenship and the franchise by Constitutional Amendment in the post-Civil War period, the Negro met obstacles of many kinds to impede his use of them. The history of his struggle to maintain and use them is erratic, as circumstances forced them to be, yet persistent, as impelled by man's urge for freedom.

One impediment developed from a new bondage forced upon him by sharecropping in the South which curtailed his economic freedom. 12 That plight has been blamed on the failure of Congress to extend financial support of the Freedmen's Bureau. 13 Poverty of the oppressed has always been a hindrance to concerted action.

Encouraged to use his vote during Reconstruction by Radical Republicans, Carpetbaggers and Scalawags, the Negro

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found the climate changing in the late 1870's and early 1880's. Many southern states began to make voting more difficult for them. The Populist revolt saw both Populists and Democrats appeal to Negro voters. The resultant stir of Negro political interest was short-lived as it frightened Southern whites into more determined moves to check it. By the use of literacy tests, poll taxes, fright campaigns and other means Negroes were largely disfranchised in all the southern states except Maryland, Tennessee and Kentucky, by 1907.

Those things coupled with the unfavorable Supreme Court decisions led to what publicly appeared to be a stagnant period for Negroes until after World War I. Booker T. Washington, the able Negro leader, is credited with counseling his people to "a policy of patient submissiveness," while they "learned to become good citizens."

Stagnation and submissiveness were only outward appearances of Negro life during that space of time. In 1905, the first Negro mass movement to fight growing race discrimination

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14 Link, Epoch, p. 29.  
15 Ibid.  
17 Link, Epoch, p. 29.
in this country began with the Niagara Movement. At a second meeting held a year later, significantly at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, a resolution was adopted which read:

We shall not be satisfied with less than our full manhood rights . . . . We claim for ourselves every right that belongs to a free-born American--political, civil and social--and until we have got those rights, we shall never cease to protest and assail the ears of America with the story of its shameful deeds toward us.

The race riot in Washington, D.C., on July 19, 1919, is considered by Adam C. Powell, Jr., the New York Negro member of the House of Representatives since 1944, as the turning point in Negro life in America. He declares the Negro fought back then and would fight from then on. Other riots involving Negroes occurred in a number of cities from Texas to Nebraska and Illinois following an increase of Negro lynchings in the United States to seventy in 1919. Many Negro soldiers who fought with the American Expeditionary Force in France returned to those conditions at home. Thousands of them had fought to "make the world safe for democracy" only to find it shadowed in the United States.

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20 Powell, Blacks, p. 42.
21 Link, Epoch, p. 245.
22 Ibid., p. 244.
President Wilson, busy with the war and the treaty making, failed to assume any personal responsibility for preservation of civil liberties. He left the task to subordinates and the public when few were willing to show moderation.  

In 1910, organization of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) evolved from the old Niagara Movement. Post-war racism fired its membership to resolutely and sometimes radical action that had continued unabated.  

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, writing to the American Committee of Foreign Born, declared, "We must scrupulously guard the civil rights and civil liberties of all citizens, whatever their background." But he apparently decided to subordinate the direct civil rights program of Negro groups to the indirect benefits which would be gained by the New Deal. He was spurred to action, however, by Wendell Wilkie's bid for the Negro vote in 1940,

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25 The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1940 Vol., War--and Aid to Democracies, compiled and edited by Samuel I. Rosenman (New York, 1941), 36.
and the threatened march of 10,000 Negroes on Washington in 1941. Yielding to the pressure at a time when it was imperative that national preparedness continue, Roosevelt issued an Executive Order establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee. It was designed to insure that all departments and agencies of the United States government concerned with defense production take "special measures" to assure their administration "without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin." That accomplishment marked an advance by minority pressure groups previously unequaled in this country. It was the first commitment of a branch of the Federal Government toward non-discrimination policy, and it bequeathed to Truman and his successors a blueprint for action that had reached the point of no return.

Minority groups within the United States cannot always be categorically delineated on clear-cut, numerical, national, racial, language or religious differences. But minorities do exist. In this country they are those groups who face

26 Longaker, Presidency and Liberties, p. 9. The proposed march, also reported by the Negroes, was supposed to have originated with the International Sleeping Car Porters' Union aided by NAACP and others. Powell, Blacks, p. 149.

27 Longaker, Presidency and Liberties, p. 9; Executive Order No. 8802, June 25, 1941; Federal Register, VI, No. 125, 3109.

28 Ibid.
certain handicaps, and are the objects of certain discrimina-
tion and prejudices shown by most other people.
Prominent among these are the Jews, often subjected to
anti-Semitic prejudices, Spanish-speaking Americans
(commonly called Latin-Americans here, whatever their
heritage), held to the similar low status of the Negro, the
Indians, long abused, Japanese-Americans, victims of
alien security measures in World War II, and Catholics, on
the basis of religious difference to the dominant majority.
All of these groups demonstrated increasing organizational
strength and pressures during the 1940's. Reluctantly, and
sometimes vaguely, other Americans began to listen to their
complaints; probably because the evil of racial discrimi-
nation was impressed upon the national conscience by the
hateful racism of Nazi foes.

Out of this background and within this framework,
Truman fell heir to the role of the presidency in the re-
kindled galaxy of demands for extending civil rights to all
Americans. To the average citizen, opposed or approving,
it is remembered as the pivotal theme of his administration,
though eclipsed by the use of the atomic bomb, the Korean
conflict and the beginning of the Cold War.

30 Ibid., p. 55.
CHAPTER II

YEARS OF EXIGENCE

For the man who inherited the Presidency in April, 1945, the first three years in office were filled with serious issues. Somewhat strangely, perhaps, civil rights issues crowded into the maze of unsolved problems troubling a nation at war on both sides of the world and the readjustment needs that followed.

An indication of that appeared in Truman's first press conference less than five days after he took office, when he was asked how he stood on the Fair Employment Practices Act, the right to vote without being hampered by poll taxes, and other matters of special interest to Negroes. In answer he referred them to his Senate record.¹ Twice in the Senate of 1938, he signed unsuccessful petitions for cloture to bring motions to close debate and end a Southern filibuster against the anti-lynching bill.² He did the same thing in


1942, in a vain effort to stop filibustering against a bill to do away with poll tax requirements for voting. 3 That same year Senator Truman introduced a bill to establish the George Washington Carver National Monument, a tribute to the great southern Negro scientist. 4

Though characterized by one of his biographers as having been, "President in the dark," 5 when he took office, Truman, in spite of his apparent modesty, said he "fully intended to plunge deeply into the business of government." 6 Furthermore he had a conviction that the President is the representative of the whole nation and the only lobbyist of all the people. 7 This was expressed in the new President's first appearance in Congress on April 16, 1945, when he promised: "There will be no relaxation in our efforts to improve the lot of the common people." 8

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3Ibid., 77th Congress, 2nd session, LXXXVIII, pt. 7, 9033 and 9065.
4Truman, Freedom and Equality, p. xv.
6Truman, Memoirs, I, 59.
8Congressional Digest, XXV (June-July, 1946), 6-7, 168.
In fact, Harry Truman had just spoken out against discrimination and prejudice in a speech while still vice-President, in March, 1945. He said:

Evil doctrines of discrimination frequently imported from gangster nations plague certain areas in America. Racial and religious intolerance is being preached here by agents of our enemies, as well as by innocent victims of their propaganda. . . . The after-effects of this poison may be felt for years to come, especially if we do not recognize its danger and actively combat its spread. No nation on earth is more vulnerable to intolerance and bigotry than America, for no nation is composed of more diverse races and differing creeds than this land of the free. America became great by being a secure haven for freedom of thought and action.  

Efforts of minority groups for presidential aid, begun under Franklin D. Roosevelt, continued under Truman, who somehow found time for many of them. Among the first, on April 20, 1945, was Dr. Stephen S. Wise, who came to project the concern of Jews in America, for the persecuted Jews of war-torn Europe. 10 The President expressed his sympathetic interest which was later decisive in the establishment of Israel. Truman's aides in the White House also urged him to see a group from the Negro Newspaper Publisher's Association, meeting in Washington that May. They suggested it would allay criticism circulating because he had not yet seen Negroes on important issues, and

10Truman, Memoirs, I, 68.
besides President Roosevelt had seen them the year before and invited them to come back. The busy President complied.  

Truman's first difficulties over civil rights measures concerned legislation proposed in the last weeks of the Roosevelt administration. Bills had already been introduced in both houses to make permanent the Fair Employment Practices Committee, established by Roosevelt in 1941. Senator Chavez introducing the FEPC Bill in the Senate, recalled that the Democratic platform promised legislation to guarantee minority rights, while the Republican platform had actually pledged the establishment of a permanent Commission, and that both candidates had spoken in favor of it during the campaign. The Chavez reminders accomplished little, for the bill was still in committee when Truman took office. The bill was favorably reported to the Senate on May 24th, by a 12 to 5 Committee vote, but it was not called for floor action.

Representative Mary Norton's FEPC bill in the House had been favorably reported by the House Labor Committee early in 1945, but the Rules Committee refused to permit it to be

1\textsuperscript{11} Matt J. Connelly to Steve Early, May 3, 1945, Truman Papers, O. F. 594.
1\textsuperscript{12} Congressional Record, 79th Congress, 1st Session, LXXXI, pt. 1, 60.
1\textsuperscript{13} Congressional Digest, XX (May, 1945), 5:168.
brought to the floor for consideration. President Truman appealed to Chairman Adolph Sabath, of the Rules Committee to get the FEPC bill out for consideration early in May. In the letter he said:

Discrimination in the matter of employment against properly qualified persons because of their race, creed, or color is not only un-American in nature but will lead to industrial strife and unrest. The principle and policy of fair employment practices should be established permanently as a part of our national law. He went so far as to send a similar message to a "Save the FEPC Rally," in Town Hall, in Washington, June 19th.

None of Truman's efforts could get the bill through that summer. Party loyalty, even in a Democratic Congress, could not surmount the opposition of southern congressmen and their constituents. One Southern newspaper called it "pressure group and class legislation" that would "set racial relationships back a generation." Even his friend, Democratic Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn, who might have turned the trick, refused to help and was unalterably opposed. Later, Rayburn told the Association of Democratic

14Ibid., XXV (January, 1946), 1-4.
15Truman to Sabath, May 7, 1945, Congressional Record, 79th Congress, 1st session, LXXXI, pt. 5, 5795.
16Ibid., pt. 12, A 3257.
County Chairman of Texas that he had been fighting FEPC in Washington for years and assured them of his continued efforts against it.\textsuperscript{18}

Due to the Japanese surrender, Truman was forced to call the Congress back into session in September, for the purpose of post-war revision planning. He repeated his request for a permanent FEPC in his famous "21 point" message to Congress on September 6, 1945.\textsuperscript{19} Again his request was ignored. The best he could do was to continue the life of the FEPC under the extended War Agencies Act by executive order in December.\textsuperscript{20} At the same time, upon complaint of the FEPC, that there was widespread race and religious bias against war-workers who sought peacetime jobs,\textsuperscript{21} Mr. Truman directed an intensive investigation in all departments of government and asked full cooperation with FEPC from independent establishments.\textsuperscript{22}

When the 79th Congress reconvened in January, 1946, the members were still edgy over Truman's action in calling them back to Washington in September. He had asked so much

\textsuperscript{18}Rayburn to W. E. Biggs, June 17, 1947, Miscellaneous 1947 Files, Rayburn Papers.

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Congressional Record}, 79th Congress, 1st session, LXXXI, pt. 6, 8381.

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}, pt. 9, 12503.

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Facts on File}, V (December 16, 1945), 399.

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Congressional Record}, 79th Congress, 1st session, LXXXI, pt. 9, 12505.
and they were thinking of getting back Congressional power that had waned while the executive had extra war-time powers. Congress had for twelve long years been forced to grant grudging consent to the proposals of Truman's predecessor, for reasons of emergency, preparedness and war itself. Their surprise and resentment that Truman had been so positive and had presented so many recommendations at once were still evident.

Mr. Truman's "Fair Deal," had originated in that September message. It set the stage for the struggle between the President and Congress that was to last through his tenure. One close observer declared "that message and its meanings cost him the Congressional elections of 1946." It might be added that eventually it cost the Republicans the presidential and congressional elections of 1948. Truman himself said the 1948 platform was written on the basis of the twenty-one points he laid down then.

At any rate the Senate was in no frame of mind to receive favorably the re-introduction of the FEPC bill by

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23 Congressional Digest, XXV (January, 1946), 1:1.
25 Daniels, Man of Independence, p. 299.
26 Ibid., p. 298.
Senator Chavez for consideration on the floor early in January.\(^{27}\) Hostile blasts from Southern Senators began at once. Senator Eastland, of Mississippi, announced he was ready to talk against the measure for two years if necessary, while his colleague, Senator Bilbo, was willing to speak twice against it, thirty days at a time—and the filibuster was on. Senator George, of Georgia, is reputed to have said: "If this is all that Harry Truman has to offer, God help the Democratic Party in 1946 and 1948!"\(^{29}\) The twenty-three day filibuster finally ended early in February when a cloture motion by Senator Barkley was defeated 48 to 36, and the bill had to be withdrawn.\(^{30}\) By April a coalition majority of Republicans and conservative Democrats had been established which spelled doom for almost all of Truman's recommendations.

If unpopular in Congress, Truman's ideas on civil rights were appreciated in other places. A former Assistant United States Attorney General, speaking in Arizona, praised the President's stand. He said:

\[\ldots\text{ he is trying to make democracy work.}\]
\[\ldots\text{ Even more, he is giving all of us, regardless of}\]

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\(^{27}\) *Congressional Digest*, XXV (January, 1946), 1:34.


\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) *Congressional Digest*, XXV (February, 1946), 3:65.
race, color or creed, every opportunity to contribute our share in making democracy work. He could take a much easier road, but he will live to be thankful he didn't.

He has the wisdom to see that the problems we now face are not to be solved by temporary expedients or political legerdemain. 

he is charged with being everything except that which he is—a true believer in the fundamentals of democracy. 31

The FEPC bills were never acted on in Congress despite the pleas of men like Representative T. Millett Hand, of New Jersey, who deplored the fact that the bill had never reached the floor for debate. He quoted from the FEPC resignation at the "death" of the committee when the temporary order for it automatically expired with the end of the War Agencies appropriations on June 30, 1946.

The FEPC Committee stated that their unsolved cases showed executive authority was not enough to insure compliance and that only legislative requirements could accomplish it. Their studies showed that colored, Mexican-American, and Jewish workers were suffering an unchecked post-war revival of discriminatory practices. 32

On July 25, 1946, a mob of twenty white men forced two Negro couples out of a car and murdered them with shotgun, rifle and pistol fire, in a small town in Georgia. 33  One

31 Fred Ironsides, Jr., to Truman, (copy of speech enclosed) March 18, 1946, Truman Papers, O. P. 593.
32 Congressional Record, 79th Congress, 2nd session, LXXXXII, pt. 9, A 4173-74.
of the Negro men was charged with stabbing a white man. The incident brought numerous appeals and suggestions to the President for more stringent steps to curb such violence. Among them was a joint resolution enacted by the Senate and House of the Illinois General Assembly, in special session, July 31, 1946. The Resolution briefly deplored the lynchings, calling them a revival of the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia. The major portion of the statement protested that because of the lynchings many thousand Negro citizens would feel compelled to leave "the balmy climate of their Southern homes and face the rigors of our Northern winters in our teeming and over-crowded cities." And saddest of all (to the Illinois Assembly), "such migration will be the further congestion of rental accommodations in the large cities of this state which are already unbearably over-crowded." They wanted executive action.

Other complaints of violations of civil liberties reached the White House that summer and fall. The National Maritime Union of America in July went so far as to demand the removal of Attorney General Tom Clark. He was accused of laxity and duplicity in failing to prosecute over 2,000 violations against the civil rights of minorities.  

34. Copy of the Resolution, Truman Papers, O. F. 596-A.  
35. Leonard Lamb to Truman, July 6, 1946, ibid., 10-Miscellaneous.
More significance can be attached to a communication from Attorney General Clark to the President in early October. It enclosed the draft of an Executive Order, and stated:

I have the honor to transmit herewith for your consideration a proposed Executive Order entitled, "Establishing the President's Committee on Civil Rights." The proposed Order was prepared in this Department, and I recommend its promulgation. The work of the proposed Committee would, in my opinion, be of the utmost value in the task of preserving and implementing our civil rights. I may add, also, that the Order has my approval as to form and legality.36

On December 5, 1946, President Truman issued the executive order establishing the President's Committee on Civil Rights,37 naming as members fifteen prominent citizens from various sections of the country. The Committee was charged to investigate and determine conditions and what means could be employed to safeguard the civil rights of the people and to report to the President in writing. In a press statement the President said the Committee had been created to make recommendations for legislation and other means of strengthening the Federal Government's hand, in dealing with such problems as racial

36 Tom Clark to Truman, October 11, 1946, ibid., O. P. 596-A.

discrimination and mob violence. He said "freedom from fear" had been threatened after the war when organized groups fanned hatred and intolerance and "mob action struck fear into the hearts of men and women, because of their racial origin or religious belief." He asserted that American freedoms and "the institutions which strive to keep them are again under attack today." He said local enforcement of law and order had broken down in some places, allowing individuals, even ex-servicemen, to be killed, maimed or intimidated. Further, he declared:

The Constitutional guarantees of individual liberties clearly place on the Federal Government the duty to act when state or local authorities abridge or fail to protect these Constitutional rights.

Mr. Truman's statement added that the federal government was hampered by inadequate civil rights statutes which should be enlarged and improved. 38

The New York Times said Mr. Truman gave no specific examples of the reasons which prompted him to name the Committee. The paper suggested such instances as the lynching of the four Negroes in Georgia, resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan similar to the post-war years of the twenties, inception in Atlanta, Georgia, of a hate organization called "The Columbians," election riots in Tennessee, and charges

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that Negroes had been kept away from the polls in Mississippi by intimidation. A striking coincidence, bearing out the President's statement was that the same issue of the paper carried a report on the current proceedings of a Senatorial Campaign Investigation Committee in Jackson, Mississippi. The hearing involved Senator Bilbo of that state who had been charged with intimidating Negro voters in his recent re-election.

A side light on the naming of the Civil Rights Committee was an exchange of letters between the White House and the Illinois Inter-Racial Commission. The Commission had written a series of letters suggesting that some kind of national conference be called or appointed to "develop some practical techniques for the alleviation of race prejudice, discrimination and segregation," and that "representatives of all races and creeds should be called to it." In December a presidential secretary answered as follows:

I am happy to be able to reply after this long delay, to your letters of August 6, and August 12, addressed to the President.

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39Ibid.
40Ibid.
41Russell Lambert to William D. Hassett, November 15, 1946, Truman Papers, O. F. 596-A.
The proposals contained in those letters were closely similar to plans which have now been brought to a completion with the announce- ment yesterday that the President had created, by Executive order, a Committee on Civil Rights. 42

The Committee set up Washington headquarters and quietly went to work. A note from one member of the White House staff to another expressed that factually, if in the vernacular, when it said that the President might be interested to see how his Civil Rights Committee was "taking him off the hot seat" by "moving in on" a recent lynching in South Carolina. 43

In the annual State of the Union Message, January 6, 1947, President Truman told the Congress of recent infringements upon the constitutional rights of individual citizens resulting from racial and religious bigotry, prevention of participation in local and national elections and denial of freedom to engage in lawful callings. He also said:

The will to fight these crimes should be in the heart of everyone of us. . . . I am not convinced that present legislation reaches the limit of Federal power to protect the civil rights of its citizens.

I have therefore, by Executive order, established the President's Committee on Civil

42 William D. Hassett to Mortin H. Bickham, December 6, 1946.

Rights to study and report on the whole problem of federally secured civil rights, with a view to making recommendations to the Congress. 44

Addressing the Civil Rights Committee at a White House meeting January 15, Mr. Truman told them he wanted the Bill of Rights "implemented in fact." He said the nation had been trying to do that for 150 years, and had made some progress. But it was not making progress fast enough. He thought the country might easily be faced with a situation similar to the Ku Klux Klan revival in 1922. 45

In June, Truman addressed the annual convention of the NAACP, meeting in Washington, with this restatement of his civil rights program:

As Americans we believe that every man should be free to live his life as he wishes. He should be limited only by responsibility to his fellow countrymen. If this freedom is to be more than a dream, each man must be guaranteed equality of opportunity. The only limit to an American's achievement should be his ability, his industry and his character. 46

The Administration achieved no civil rights legislation in 1947. Certainly it was not expected from the opposition 80th Congress. Perhaps both the Congress and the Executive were too occupied with the controversial Taft-Hartley Labor Act, passed over Presidential veto,

45 Truman, Memoirs, II, 181.
46 Ibid.
to the disparagement of the unions, who felt it off-set some of their civil rights. Mr. Truman denounced it as a "slave labor act."\textsuperscript{47}

In the meantime the troubles of minorities in the United States continued to pile up. In California, 200 high school students protested the enrollment of six Negroes. They hung a Negro in effigy and booed the principal when he cut it down. When the home of a Negro family near a steel mill was set afire all three members of the family were burned to death. KKK symbols were daubed on synagogues and sidewalks in San Francisco and Palo Alto. Negroes migrated to work in California war plants in the war years. When 65,000 impounded Japanese-Americans returned after the war there was unemployment and housing difficulties. Governor Earl Warren was denied the requested establishment of a Fair Employment Practices Committee by the California Legislature in 1946 and again in 1947.\textsuperscript{48} A local union of twenty thousand electrical workers in Lynn, Massachusetts, grumbled to President Truman of the inability to get a non-discrimination clause in their contract after years of effort, and in spite of the recent appointment of the company president, Charles E.


Wilson, as Chairman of the President's new Committee on Civil Rights. Spanish-American citizens complained to the President of discrimination against them in restaurants, hotels and schools in various parts of the country. The lament was voiced in these words:

We, or at least our ancestors, were here before anyone, and we have at all times adhered to and obeyed the laws . . . and therefore should be recognized and have some representation. 50

It was small wonder that Mr. Truman welcomed the report of the Civil Rights Committee in October, 1947. The Committee brought to the President and to the Nation a sizeable volume of 173 pages titled, To Secure These Rights. The President anticipated the report as "an American Charter of Freedom in our time," adding:

For us here in America a new charter of human freedom will be a guide for action; and in the eyes of the world, it will be a declaration of our renewed faith in the American goal—the integrity of the individual human being, sustained by the moral consensus of the whole nation, protected by a government based on equal freedom under just laws. 51

49Frederick M. Kelly to Truman, January 22, 1947, Truman Papers, O. P. 596-A.
50F. R. Espinosa to Truman, October 3, 1947, ibid.
CHAPTER III

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Membership of the President's Committee on Civil Rights included industrialists, clergymen, lawyers, educators and representatives of minority groups; nearly all were known for humanitarian efforts. There were two women and two Negroes on the Committee. The South had two representatives, though they did not come from the traditional anti-civil rights element of the region. Chairman of the Committee was Charles Edward Wilson, President of General Electric Company, who had served as Executive vice-Chairman of the War Production Board from 1942 to 1944.¹

A representative of the South was Dorothy R. Tilley, of Atlanta, Georgia, secretary of Christian Social Relations for the Women's Society of Christian Service of the Methodist Church, member of the American Christian Palestine Commission to Israel, 1948, and a Director of the Fellowship of the Concerned (an organization of Southern women concerned about the welfare of the South).²

¹Biographical data on the Committee members were taken from the New York Times, December 6, 1946, except where otherwise noted.

Mrs. Tilly was said to have shown concern over lynchings to the point of personal investigation at the scene of the crime. Another able representative of the South was Dr. Frank P. Graham, a Democrat, and President of the University of North Carolina. Dr. Graham, eminent historian and an outstanding Southern liberal had contributed to national life in many capacities. In the field of education he had been president of the National Association of State Universities and a Trustee of the Carnegie Foundation. He had served the national government previously as a member of the War Labor Board, the National Defense Mediation Board, the National Emergency Council and as Chairman of the National Advisory Board on Social Security.

The other female member, a representative of the Negro race, was Sadie T. Alexander, of Philadelphia, wife of a Negro attorney who had at one time served on the National Republican Committee. Mrs. Alexander, also a lawyer, had been Assistant City Solicitor in Philadelphia since 1928, and a member of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. She is credited with the authorship of an extensive survey on the standard of living among Negro

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4Leaders in Education (Lancaster, 1948), p. 413.
families in Philadelphia. A second representative of the Negroes was Channing H. Tobias, of New York, an independent in politics and former secretary of the Colored Work Department of the National Council of the Y. M. C. A.

Other Committee members came from backgrounds representing a wide variety of professions. James B. Carey, of Washington, D. C., representing Labor was secretary-treasurer of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, chairman of the CIO committee to abolish race discrimination, and had been a member of the Production Planning Board in the Government Office of Production Management in 1941. John S. Dickey, President of Dartmouth College, had served as Director of the Office of Public Affairs in the Department of State during 1944 and 1945. Morris L. Ernst, lawyer and author of New York City, active in New York politics, labor and banking circles had been a consultant of the War Production Board. Rabbi Roland G. Gittelsohn, leader of the Central Synagogue at Rockville, Long Island, was the recipient of the Navy Commendation Medal for his services as Jewish Chaplain of the Fifth Marine Division at Iwo Jima. The Most Reverend Francis J. Haas, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids, had acted as a special consiliator for the United States Department of Labor, and as Chairman of The President's Fair

Employment Practices Committee in 1943. Charles Luckman, businessman of Cambridge, Massachusetts, president of Lever Brothers, had formerly served as consultant to the War Loan Division of the United States Treasury. Francis P. Matthews, Omaha lawyer, was a Democrat, former Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, vice-president of the National War Fund, a Director in the Department of Finance of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, and had done extensive civic work in numerous fields. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., Democrat and New York lawyer, was also chairman of the Housing Committee of the American Veteran's Committee. Right Reverend Henry Knox Sherrill, Boston, presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States, was also a member of the Massachusetts Governor's Committee on Racial and Religious Understanding. Boris Shiskin, Alexandria, Virginia, an economist for the American Federation of Labor, was a former member of The President's Fair Employment Practices Committee. Robert K. Carr, Chairman of the Department of Government, Dartmouth College, served as executive secretary of the Civil Rights Committee.

The Committee was organized into three sub-committees to explore the Civil Liberties problems: (1) Committee to consider and determine the adequacy of existing federal legislation. (2) Committee to consider the broader social, economic and educational aspects of promoting the cause.
of civil liberties. (3) Committee to consider the work of private organizations whose activities affect civil liberties.\textsuperscript{6}

The Committee met ten times between January and September, 1947, heard some forty witnesses, corresponded with nearly two hundred and fifty organizations and individuals, and was assisted by twenty-five agencies of the federal government and numerous state and local public agencies.\textsuperscript{7} Consultants who were well-known and recognized for knowledge, ability and experience in their respective fields were called in by the Committee. Among those consulted were Mike Masaka, representative of the Japanese-American Citizen's League, and Thurgood Marshall and Walter White, representatives of the Negro population. For problems of the Jewish segment of the population the Committee consulted representatives of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League.

Prominent among those appearing before the Committee representing government agencies was J. Edgar Hoover, head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Hoover testified

\textsuperscript{6}Civil Liberties File, Truman Papers.

\textsuperscript{7}To Secure These Rights, p. 178.

\textsuperscript{8}Proceedings of the Committee, Records of The President's Committee on Civil Rights, Civil Rights File, Box 12, Truman Papers.
on the work of the FBI but pointed out that the function of the FBI was merely investigatory—to get the facts and available evidence, which was then turned over to the grand jury and that the action of the grand jury and petit jury was not within the control of the FBI. He gave specific instances to demonstrate how the work was done. One such case occurred in Monroe, Georgia, with the Bureau placing twenty agents on the case and interviewing over 2,700 individuals involving a lynching in July, 1946. The government could get no action from local authorities, the sheriff took no action, and despite evidence of 166 witnesses the grand jury returned a no-bill. He termed the arrogance of the white population of the county as "unbelievable as was the fear of the Negroes." He noted that the situation was different in some other places where the FBI received more cooperation. Two months previous to his meeting with the Committee the FBI men gained "fine local cooperation, with a militant spirit on the part of the citizens and the governor in bringing the culprit to justice" in a lynching case in South Carolina. In election riots at Columbia, Tennessee, in 1946, the FBI gathered much evidence but the grand jury declared no violation of a Federal statute was apparent and returned a no-bill. A steady decline in lynchings was noted, with a drop to
forty-five in the past ten years compared to one hundred and seventy-two in the previous decade. However, said the FBI head, "Even one lynching is one too many."\(^9\) Hoover declined to make suggestions to the Committee, but he was willing to share some ideas reached from his years of experience in the investigation of civil rights crimes and denials. It had been found that Sections 51 and 52 of the Federal statutes (relics of Reconstruction days and the only Civil Rights laws usable for Federal cases) were too general and ambiguous in wording with ineffectual penalties. He believed that clear-cut statutes were needed which would set forth the various rights to be protected by the federal government as opposed to those which would be protected by the states, and with stiffer criminal penalties.\(^{10}\) Hoover's hearing and advice was representative of the type of inquiry and study made by the Civil Rights Committee.

The report disclosed that the Committee had sought answers to the following questions:

(1) What is the historic civil rights goal of the American people?  
(2) In what ways does the present record fall short of the goal?

\(^9\)Transcript of J. Edgar Hoover's testimony, March 20, 1947, \textit{ibid.}  
\(^{10}\)Ibid.
(3) What is government's responsibility for the achievement of the goal?

(4) What further steps does the nation now need to take to reach the goal?\(^{11}\)

The report first reviewed the heritage of the nation in the area of freedom and equality. Listed were four basic rights considered essential to the well-being of the individual and to the progress of society:

(1) The Rights to Safety and Security of the Person.
(2) The Right to Citizenship and its Privileges.
(3) The Right to Freedom of Conscience and Expression.
(4) The Right to Equality of Opportunity.\(^{12}\)

It was concluded that "at varying times in American history the gulf between ideals and practice has been wide," but also that "the civil rights of the American people--all of them--can be strengthened quickly and effectively by the normal processes of democratic, constitutional government."\(^{13}\)

Secondly, the Committee reported evidence upon which the national record was declared, "Short of the Goal."

The Committee enumerated numerous minorities, some created by the diversity of origin in the American population, some from religious differences, others from differences in color,

\(^{11}\) *To Secure These Rights*, p. xii.


and still others from diversity of national cultures. Signs of progress were noted in the growing awareness shown by more Americans of the discrepancy between ideals and practices in the United States and greater recognition of responsibilities of leadership in public life and institutions. Advances toward more equal opportunities and fairer employment practices were acknowledged. Continued freedom of the press, increasing use of the ballot by minority groups and substantial reductions in the number of lynchings were pointed to as healthy gains in the extension of civil rights. Yet, the Committee detailed explicit conditions where the rights of Americans had been severely curtailed. Included were mob violence which was the source of six lynchings in 1946, evidence of police brutality, mal-function in the courts against minority cases, enforced labor approaching actual involuntary servitude, and the mass evacuation and detention of thousands of Japanese-Americans during World War II with no remuneration for the losses suffered.

The Committee cited infringements on the rights of citizenship in many areas, including denial of the franchise to nationals on the islands of Guam and Samoa and even

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14 Ibid., p. 20.
to the permanent citizens living in Washington, D.C. The percentage of voters in the seven remaining poll tax states was found to be much less than in free-vote states. Abridgement of the right to bear arms and discrimination in the armed services was noted. The Committee saw the most immediate threat to the right of freedom of opinion and expression as the indirect result of necessary efforts to thwart those enemies of democracy known as Communists and Fascists. Expressing the idea that the criterion of "clear and present danger" expounded by the Supreme Court was sometimes lost sight of in the hurried hysteria of some people who attacked as "Communists" others with whom they disagreed, the Committee warned that this fallacy could deter the exposure of real Communists and Fascists.

The Right to Equality of Opportunity in employment was found lacking to some extent in private business, in government and in labor unions. According to the report the Committee studies unearthed discriminatory practices in hiring and on-the-job discrimination.

Also reported were the facets of inequality in educational opportunity, housing, health services, and in other public services and accommodations. "Segregation has become the cornerstone of the elaborate structure of discrimination against some American citizens," said the
The Committee decried the theory of the "separate but equal" doctrine as being, "... one of the outstanding myths of American history." Particular account was taken by the Committee of discrimination against Negroes in the District of Columbia creating conditions which the Committee labeled as "intolerable." The Committee put the responsibility for securing the rights of the people squarely on the shoulders of the national government. Reasons given for this stand were: the inability of state and local governments to safeguard civil rights, the alleged soundness of a policy that would use the idealism and prestige of the whole people to check the shortcomings of a part of them, widespread international repercussions to civil rights practices of the United States, and a suggested tendency of the population "to look to the national government for the protection of their civil rights." And finally the report presented the premise that the national government should lead in the civil rights program because of the more than two million government

\[15\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 81.}\]
\[16\text{Ibid.}\]
\[17\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 95.}\]
\[18\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 101.}\]
employees. The Committee, after analyzing both the broad and specific implications of the Constitution, asserted, "the Committee believes that federal legislation in support of civil liberty is legitimate and well within the scope of the Constitution." 19 The work of the Supreme Court in safeguarding civil rights was reviewed and the Committee found an important increase in civil rights cases handled by the Court in the last decade. 20 Further study was given to the work of the Civil Rights Section in the Department of Justice. Here, the Committee found the work handicapped by the inadequate specifications of Sections 51 and 52 and 444 of Title 18, of the United States Criminal Statutes, 21 and weakened by its subordinate position in the Department of Justice. 22 Attention was called to the use of sanctions to compel protection of civil rights, including criminal penalties, civil remedies, administrative orders, withholding of grants-in-aid upon discriminatory practices, and disclosure. 23 Above all the Committee Report

19 Ibid., p. 112.
20 Ibid., p. 113.
21 Ibid., p. 16.
22 Ibid., p. 125.
23 Ibid., p. 127.
recognized the importance of striving to create a favorable climate of public opinion as nearly free of prejudice as possible. 24

Finally, a program of action was presented by the Committee. Along with it three reasons were given for immediate planning. First, the moral reason: suggesting that the conscious knowledge of unfairness to minorities would in itself make inroads upon the moral strength of the nation; second, the economic reason: that discrimination in employment and on other economic levels creates loss in money, production, buying power, invention and economic leadership to the entire United States; and third, the international reason: the position of the United States in world leadership for peace and progress is impaired by the record of domestic civil rights inadequacies. 25

The recommendations of the Committee 26 included strengthening and raising the Civil Rights Section to the status of a full division in the Department of Justice, establishment of a permanent Commission on Civil Rights in the Executive branch of the government, preferably by Act of Congress, and a Joint Standing Committee on Civil Rights

24 Ibid., p. 127.
25 Ibid., p. 133.
26 Ibid., pp. 151-173.
in Congress. New and stronger national civil rights statutes with stiffer penalties were called for, as well as increased forces and improved facilities at state and local levels for civil rights protection. Further, the Committee proposed enactment by Congress of an anti-lynching law, an end to poll tax requirements, federal statutes to guarantee voting rights, granting of the franchise to Indians in Arizona and New Mexico, and Congressional legislation for local self-government in the District of Columbia, along with amendment of the Constitution to extend suffrage in presidential and congressional elections to residents of the District.

Elimination of all segregation based on race, color, creed or national origin entirely from American life was the boldest recommendation. It carried with it the proposal for conditioning of all forms of federal grants or assistance to public or private agencies on the absence of discrimination and segregation. This proposal, however, embodied a minority report from the southern members of the Committee, who favored elimination of segregation as an ultimate goal, but opposed use of federal sanctions to enforce it. The minority also objected to segregation requirements in education on the basis that it represented federal control over education.27

27Ibid., p. 166; see also Daniels, Man of Independence, pp. 340-342.
A Fair Employment Practices Act, elimination of segregation in the Armed Forces and laws to end restrictive covenants in housing were also recommended. Specific proposals were included for ending segregation in Washington, D. C.

Reactions to the Committee Report offered a study in opposites. They were many and varied. Some individuals and some groups found the information and the proposals challenging, while others were disdainful of the work and angered by its suggestions. President Truman received the report in October, 1947, and announced his intention to study the report carefully, and he urged all citizens to do the same. He had the report published through the government printing office which reported the sale of over 25,000 copies within the first two weeks. Private publishers also printed copies of the report in large quantities, and they found a ready sale. One New York newspaper alone sold over 200,000 copies.

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The President felt he spoke for all Americans in expressing gratitude to the Committee members for "unselfish and devoted service." And when he said the report showed that a positive need existed for "legislation to secure the rights of American minority groups," he undoubtedly felt strong satisfaction that his opinion of 1946, indicating the same need, had been documented. The many unresolved cases handled by the FEPC at that time had led him to the conclusion that "executive authority was not enough to insure compliance in the face of organized opposition." It was typical of Truman to have placed the investigation in the hands of a citizen's committee for investigation. He knew well the possibilities of such a committee, for his own work on the Senate investigation committee of war production, which came to be known as the Truman Committee, had brought him the nomination as Franklin Roosevelt's running mate in the 1944 election. The report of his Civil Rights Committee in 1947 was an endorsement of his civil rights policies, and it, as much as anything, "prompted him to take a militant course," that was to bring

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31 Ibid., October 30, 1947.
32 Truman, Memoirs, II, 181.
33 Ibid., p. 180.
far-reaching results. The editor who commented: "The seriousness with which President Truman takes the work of his Committee will be judged by his action for enforcement of its program," had only a few months to wait for the President's determined action to be shown.

The statement that no citizen in any section of the country could read the report with complacency was true. It was to be expected that those of minority groups would respond with quick approval. For the first time in the history of the country they saw their problems recognized, enumerated, analyzed and publicized, by authority of the President. In addition there was new hope from the recommendations for remedial action that the report contained.

Former Supreme Court Justice Joseph M. Proskauer, speaking for the American Jewish Committee, urged immediate steps to implement the report. Dr. Stephen S. Wise, president of the American Jewish Congress, praised the legislative program offered by the Committee, suggested that the Committee be made permanent as a Civil Rights Commission, and urged the President to mobilize support of the program

35 The Christian Century, LXIV (November 12, 1947), 1356.
36 Ibid.
by calling a nation-wide civil rights conference. 38 Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, endorsed the report "as a practical program for assurance of civil rights," in a telegram to President Truman. 39

It was unique that both labor and management found the report acceptable. Examples were its endorsement by the CIO which urged the implementation of the Committee recommendations, 40 and an editorial from a publication representative of business interests which stated:

The evils that the Wilson Committee attacks with sobriety, with accuracy, with insight, are truly un-American, no less than those of foreign-inspired totalitarians . . . . . . a warm and practical love of country led the Committee to see that in these troubled times we should wipe the democratic escutcheon clean of every stain and revitalize our concept of equal rights for all. 41

National organizations and publications commented on the report and helped to make it widely read. The American Veteran's Committee notified the President of its full endorsement, commended the Civil Rights Committee for a "splendid" report, and requested immediate action on its recommendations. 42 One popular magazine declared that the

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 "Tale of Two Committees," Fortune, XXXVI (December, 1947), 3-4.
42 Chet Patterson to Truman, December 3, 1947, O. F. 596 A, Truman Papers.
report provided "a sharp and much needed prod to the Nation's conscience." Another publication of wide circulation praised the report as "one of the most stirring documents since the Bill of Rights." The editorial said further:

In it everyone will find a statement of his own rights as a citizen of this country, as well as a re-statement of what is really meant by the "American Way." It is something to live by and it is something to put to work in this America loved by all.

Youth of the nation caught the message of its challenge in many areas. High school students of New York City held a panel discussion on it by means of a Youth Forum broadcast over radio. The students asserted: "the principal attribute of democracy is the dignity of the individual, yet after the war we see movements against individuals based upon prejudices because of race or religious conviction." The panelists thought that public opinion would force enactment of the report's proposed bills. A college group in Texas wrote Congressman Sam Rayburn deploRING his stand against the Committee report. The

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college youth group supported the report as "a progressive step toward securing for minority groups the rights and protections guaranteed under the Constitution of the United States, but heretofore denied them under existing controls." The failure of the states to remedy those conditions was considered a threat to democracy which the students felt made it necessary that the remedy be provided by federal law.

In December, 1947, the American Political Science Association gave the Civil Rights Committee Report an award for best publication of the year in political science, but other segments of the population rated the report differently. Bitter opposition was voiced by those in the South who believed in white supremacy, advocated segregation and pressed for states rights. A presidential secretary wrote: "The publication of the report itself let loose a Southern storm. Intelligent Southerners were disturbed by what seemed to them to be reckless and punitive proposals." A Washington correspondent charged: "The

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46 Student Christian Association, University of Texas, to Rayburn, March 3, 1948, Miscellaneous Files 1948, Rayburn Papers.


48 Daniels, Man of Independence, p. 342.
preconceptions of its members are apparent on every one of the 178 pages of the report. In tone it is an unmitigated indictment of the South. One southern writer termed the report "a frightening document" that posed "a clear and present danger to the concept of balanced state-federal relationships in the United States." A direct protest to President Truman from the District of Columbia Federation of Women's Clubs asserted that:

The Federation deeply resents the many misleading and inaccurate statements made in the Report and opposes the upsetting of established customs and practices of the District of Columbia which would be brought about by the immediate abrogation of segregation.

Harry Byrd, the Democratic Senator from Virginia, told a Richmond audience that Truman's civil rights committee had urged a "mass invasion of state's rights." It did not require a prophet to predict a tempest brewing, if or when, the administration attempted to get legislation


51 Lottie Anderson to Truman, November 24, 1947, O. F. 596 A, Truman Papers.

52 *Houston Chronicle*, February 20, 1948.
through Congress to carry out the proposals made in the report. One prognosticator indicated that condition when he stated:

Endurance and courage are required, however, if this report is to be anything beyond a magnificent national gesture. Unless a sizable and influential number of citizens persist unrelentingly at it in their personal and professional lives, keeping the demand for justice and security of person alive in Washington, with state and local authorities and among their fellowmen, the report will be without tangible result.\textsuperscript{53}

It remained for a member of the Committee itself to make the most likely and probable pronouncement for the future of the report. Mrs. Tilly told the Women's National Press Club on December 12, 1947, that she hoped human rights would be a campaign issue in 1948, with "both political parties back of it."\textsuperscript{54} More complete accuracy was achieved by the commentator who said of the report:

In the near future it bids fair to become one of the chief political issues before the country.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53}Commonweal, XLVII (November 14, 1947), 107.
\textsuperscript{54}New York Times, December 12, 1947.
\textsuperscript{55}Congressional Digest, XXIX (February, 1950), 42.
CHAPTER IV

YEAR OF STRUGGLE

The year 1948 brought the drive toward civil rights for every individual American into sharp focus for the public eye. This was accomplished by one man, the man in the White House, Harry S. Truman. To him the year brought a season of struggle filled with the storms of denunciation, the chill of friends and party associates deserting, and the cold cynicism of political foes. He weathered it with the calm of determined dedication, unending effort and a degree of political astuteness that brought it to a close which left the nation gasping in wonder over his "impossible" victory at the polls in November.

Bolstered by the backing he received from the report of his Committee on Civil Rights, and despite the division in his cabinet on the wisdom of asking Congress to act on the report, ¹ Truman broached the matter in the State of the Union Message on January 7, 1948. His recommendations were presented to a joint session of the House and Senate in the second session of the Eightieth Congress. The President

¹Steinberg, Man From Missouri, p. 303.
introduced the civil rights section of the message by stating:

    We have a profound devotion to the welfare and rights of the individual as a human being. Our first goal is to secure fully the essential human rights of our citizens.\textsuperscript{2}

He said that the United States had always had a deep concern for human rights and that any denial of these rights was a denial of the basic beliefs of democracy and of the worth of the individual. The President credited the Civil Rights Committee report as pointing the way to "corrective action by the federal, state and local governments," and he promised to send a special message on civil rights to the Congress later, because of the need for federal action. In conclusion, President Truman said:

    We are determined that every citizen of this nation shall have an equal right and equal opportunity to grow in wisdom and in stature and to take his place in the control of the nation's destiny.\textsuperscript{3}

It should have been evident at that point that Truman was serious about civil rights and that there would be more to come from him on that subject. However, as 1948 was a Presidential election year, every action and every word of the President took on political overtones and was judged accordingly. Many members of the Congress listened in

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Congressional Record}, 80th Congress, 2nd session, LXXXIV, pt. 1, 33.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 36.
frigid silence and his critics saw nearly every proposal of the speech as a bid for votes.4 It stirred up more criticism of the Committee report and one Congressman stamped it as "the most mischievous document since Marx and Engels produced the Communist Manifesto one hundred years ago."5 A Representative from Ohio, referring to the civil rights portion of the speech, said:

Mr. Truman has just about out-Wallaced Wallace. If Mr. Wallace can make a more socialist or communist speech than Mr. Truman has just delivered, he can accomplish what I believe to be the impossible.6

The reference to Wallace dated from September of 1946, when Truman had dismissed Henry Wallace from his place in the Cabinet as Secretary of Commerce, for counter-interference with the foreign policy of the administration.7 Wallace had become a definite left-wing liberal and, failing to gather a strong following within the Democratic Party, had announced the formation of a third party and his intention of running for the Presidency on its progressive platform.8

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4Congressional Digest, XXVII (February, 1948), 33.
5Ibid.
6Congressional Record, 80th Congress, 2nd session, LXXXXIV, pt. 1, 37.
7Truman, Memoirs, I, 560.
8Lowell Thomas, History as You Heard It (Garden City, 1957), p. 334.
With the left-wing of the Democratic Party sliced away it may have been expected that the President, as titular head, would undertake steps to close ranks. Leaders of his party and even members of the Cabinet urged him to soften his approach to the civil-rights issue. They warned him that he was "riding to defeat" if he did not let up on the battle for civil-rights legislation.\(^9\) Needless of the warnings, and in line with his previous announcement in Congress, President Truman sent the famous Civil Rights Message which was read in Congress on February 2, 1948. Admittedly based on the Committee report it actually did not ask for all the measures the report had recommended. Noted as the first goal of united effort to strengthen the democracy and improve the welfare of the people was the need to secure fully the essential human rights. Termed the "American faith" of millions and the basic civil rights which supported American democracy, the following concepts were declared:

We believe that all men are created equal and that they have the right to equal justice under law.

We believe that all men have the right to freedom of thought and of expression and the right to worship as they please.

We believe that all men are entitled to equal opportunities for jobs, for homes, for good health, and for education.

\(^9\)Truman, Memoirs, II, 182.
We believe that all men should have a voice in their government and that government should protect, not usurp, the rights of the people.

The President said in the message that the Federal government had a clear duty to see that constitutional guarantees of individual liberties and of equal protection under the laws were not denied or abridged in the Union. Then came the ten-point controversial program of specific objectives recommended to Congress for enactment in that session.

1. Establishing a permanent Commission on Civil Rights, a joint Congressional Committee on Civil Rights, and a Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice.

2. Strengthening existing civil rights statutes.

3. Providing Federal protection against lynching.

4. Protecting more adequately the right to vote.


6. Prohibiting discrimination in interstate transportation facilities.

7. Providing home rule and suffrage in Presidential elections for the residents of the District of Columbia.

8. Providing statehood for Hawaii and Alaska and a greater measure of self-government for our island possessions.
(9) Equalizing the opportunities for residents of the United States to become naturalized citizens.

(10) Settling the evacuation claims of Japanese-Americans.

The message ended with these words of the President:

We know that our democracy is not perfect. But we do know that it offers a fuller, freer, happier life to our people than any totalitarian nation has ever offered.

If we wish to inspire the people of the world whose freedom is in jeopardy, if we wish to restore hope to those who have already lost their civil liberties, if we wish to fulfill the promise that is ours, we must correct the remaining imperfections in our practice of democracy.

We know the way. We need only the will. ¹⁰

Then the halls of Congress exploded, verbally. Congressmen and Senators flailed Truman with scathing invectives. Altogether there were fifty-two Southern Congressmen who raged against Truman and refused to support him that year. ¹¹

Representative Rivers, of South Carolina, accused Truman of looking for political backing by seeking to attract the Negro vote of the North. He went so far as to say: "It is a sad commentary to me that President Truman will be a conscious party to that group of Americans who apologize

¹⁰Congressional Record, 60th Congress, 2nd session, LXXXIV, pt. 1, 927-929.

¹¹Steinberg, Man From Missouri, p. 303.
for the pigment of their skin," and that he had left the white people with no spokesman. He continued:

The solid South one of these days is going to rise up and surprise some of the solid-headed leaders who think that the South is still in the bag.\textsuperscript{12}

His fellow colleague, Congressman Dorn, introduced a resolution passed by the House of Representatives of the South Carolina Legislature. Congressman Dorn said that body looked upon the President's civil-rights program as the first step toward a "gestapo in Washington." The resolution called on the Congressmen to oppose the FEPC, anti-lynching and anti-segregation legislation as being "unconstitutional and un-American."\textsuperscript{13}

The caustic remarks of Representative Williams of Mississippi proved to be prophetically serious. Williams characterized the backers of Truman's program as "off-color mongrel organizations, conceived in hate, whelped in treason and deceit, and nurtured on the breast of Communism."\textsuperscript{14} He said Southern Democrat had nowhere to go; they could not join the Republicans for the Republicans had originated that "carpetbag legislation." The threat

\textsuperscript{12}Congressional Record, 80th Congress, 2nd session, LXXXXIV, pt. 1, 975.  
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 1321-22.  
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 1294-97.
that became the revolt of the conservative right-wing of the Democratic Party in the South was spelled out in the House of Representatives at that time. The Mississippi Congressman recalled that it took that state's votes to help Truman gain the vice-Presidential nomination at the 1944 convention, and denounced Truman for party leadership that would seek to win a political victory by "stabbing its best friends in the back."\textsuperscript{15} But Mississippi was not yet through with Truman. Governor Fielding Wright called for a statewide mass meeting of Mississippi Democrats, to be held in the Mississippi capital, in protest against Truman's measures. The Mississippi House of Representatives endorsed the call and agreed to attend in a body.\textsuperscript{16}

Texas Congressman Gossett led off with the protests from that state with the argument that Truman's message sprang from a "form of political expediency or hypocrisy induced by the electoral-college system of choosing Presidents."\textsuperscript{17} "Mr. Democrat" himself, Speaker Sam Rayburn, was flooded with complaints from Texas against the Truman program. He answered that he was as much opposed to the Civil Rights program as anyone, had voted against repeal

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Congressional Record}, 80th Congress, 2nd session, LXXXXIV, pt. 1, 978.
of the poll tax law in that Congress, was opposed to FEPC and the anti-lynching law, and added: "I have been too long voting on these matters to change." There was apparent danger of the largest state leaving the Truman fold. Rayburn called a "secret" meeting of the Texas delegation in his Capitol hideaway, but nearly all the Southern members of the House attended. An agreement was made that any member could sign the protest resolution being drafted by others from the South pledging a finish fight, if necessary, against legislative enactment of Truman's civil-rights program, but the Texans would not act as a solid delegation. It was decided to vote individually against the bills as they came up rather than "make a lot of noise about the President's recommendations." Party loyalty was still alive among the Texans, and Rayburn thought many of the Southern Congressmen "would cool off and should," but added that it did not mean his support of the President's "so-called civil-rights program."

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18 Rayburn to W. L. Bagwell, March 26, 1948, Miscellaneous 1948 File, Rayburn Papers.

19 Houston Chronicle, February 20, 1948.

20 Rayburn to F. O. Carris, February 12, 1948, Miscellaneous 1948 File, Rayburn Papers.
The understatement of the month was made by a New York newspaper editorial when predicting that the revival of issues like the FEPC, anti-lynching and anti-poll tax legislation would inevitably bring the threat of filibuster it closed with "these proposals are unpopular." 21

Not all of the nation's leaders nor all of the people were opposed to the Truman message; many spoke out in approval. Senator Howard McGrath praised the President's stand as a courageous one since it could cost him the votes of the South. 22 Minority groups declared the President was "providing leadership for the historic civil rights goal of the American people," with a message that was "clearly a challenge to totalitarianism." 23 A former resident of Brazil wrote the President that the civil rights measures he might propose to Congress, if adopted, would "enhance greater friendship and understanding between the United States and foreign countries." 24 A cablegram from an Ancient Scottish Rite Lodge in Paris, France, extended congratulations for the President's courageous anti-racial


22 Speech reprinted in Congressional Record, 80th Congress, 2nd session, LXXXIV, pt. 1, A1568.


24 Phyllis Rust to Truman, November 13, 1947, O. F. 596, Truman Papers.
A statement by Justice Frank Murphy said: "President Truman's struggle for civil liberties alone ought to make him the pride of every Democrat."26

There was future significance for that eventful year in the human rights stories being written between the lines by the people across the nation. The same day of the President's message to Congress, the first Negro graduate student was enrolled at the University of Arkansas.27 Twelve Negro teachers seeking graduate work at the University of Oklahoma agreed to wait another year to give that state more time to solve its racial problems.28 In a small Georgia town the Ku Klux Klan lighted a cross in front of the home of a white high school coach, and advised the coach and his principal to get out of town because of minor differences between the coach and a former student.29 Two hundred white-robbed members of the KKK burned a fiery cross on the Court House lawn of another town in the South, the first demonstration there since the 1920s.30

25Grunfeld, for Abbe Gregoire Lodge, to Truman, July 30, 1948, 596 A, ibid.

26George Murphy to Presidential secretary, December 25, 1951, O. F. 596, ibid.


28Ibid.

29Ibid., February 5, 1948.

30Ibid.
Not all of those human rights stories were written in the South. Civil rights interests were stirring in other sections also. On February 8th, it was reported that the Nisei had no hope of getting satisfaction of their evacuation claim losses under the bill before Congress.\textsuperscript{31}

The Nisei were waiting with interest, however, to see whether the Supreme Court's recent decision in the Oyama case would be a step toward outlawing of the alien lands law operating against them on the West coast.\textsuperscript{32} In New York City, the Physician's Forum proposed an amendment to the constitution of the American Medical Association to admit to membership any qualified physician regardless of race. The proposal was made because it was found that Negro physicians were barred from membership in many local societies, making it impossible for them to become specialists or work in hospitals.\textsuperscript{33}

In Washington, President Truman was forced to hear himself slandered, learned of an Eisenhower boom that threatened his candidacy, read that his political stock was at an all time low, and went on with his duties. He had

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., February 8, 1948.

\textsuperscript{32}Oyama v. California, 332 U. S. 633 (1948).

\textsuperscript{33}New York Times, February 6, 1948.
been prepared for the avalanche of abuse and said later his only resentment was against the sting of being called a Communist.\textsuperscript{34} The Roosevelt sons had joined in the move to draft Eisenhower, but Eisenhower himself removed the threat when he refused to try for the Democratic nomination on the grounds that he was a Republican.\textsuperscript{35} The pollsters issued statistics indicating that only 36 per cent of the population thought that Truman was satisfactory as President.\textsuperscript{36} Though he managed to get bills introduced in both the House and the Senate, none of Truman's civil rights legislation was passed by Congress before adjournment in June.

With the Democratic party falling apart in factions opposed to him, Truman found himself increasingly left alone by the politicians, and he was forced to work out his own strategy. "He had to be President of the United States and candidate for President of the United States by himself," said one of his biographers.\textsuperscript{37} Of his plight, Truman reminisced in his Memoirs:

Although many candidates for the presidency have had to cope with splits within their parties,

\textsuperscript{34} Statement by ex-President Truman to author, Independence, Missouri, July 28, 1961.

\textsuperscript{35} Thomas, History as you Heard it, p. 345.

\textsuperscript{36} Truman, Memoirs, II, 177.

\textsuperscript{37} Daniels, Man of Independence, p. 349.
the situation which I faced in 1948 was without a comparable precedent in the history of American politics. 38

Truman decided to take his cause directly to the people. 39

An invitation to accept an honorary degree from the University of California in June presented an excuse to make the trip at government expense, to the dismay of his opponents and to the disgrace of his office, said a hostile press. 40 Though insisting that it was "non-political,"

Truman made the fifteen-day tour useful as he made seventy-three speeches in eighteen states, covering ten thousand miles. 41 At each "whistle-stop" the President talked to the crowds and lambasted the Eightieth Congress all the way as a "do-nothing" Congress that was "the worst Congress since the first one met." 42

In late June the Republican Convention met in Philadelphia and named Governor Thomas E. Dewey, of New York, as candidate for the Presidency, with Governor Earl Warren of California, as his running mate, and inserted a civil-rights plank into the Republican platform. The GOP had

38 *Truman, Memoirs, II*, 184.
40 *Steinberg, Man From Missouri*, pp. 310-312.
41 *Time*, LI (June 28, 1948), 13.
42 *Daniels, Man of Independence*, p. 348; *Thomas, History as Heard*, p. 345.
not been so confident for two decades, consequently Dewey prepared for an easy victory, with a mild and dignified campaign.\[^{43}\]

The Democrats followed the Republicans into the "City of Brotherly Love" for their national convention in July. There was an aura of defeat about them before the convention opened; they felt Dewey would swamp Truman in the November election.\[^{44}\] And it appeared that the party again had an "inevitable" man to nominate in spite of all the Southerners and the left-wingers could do.\[^{45}\] Newsmen contended that if it had not been for the determination of the Southerners to go through with their attack on Truman and the civil rights plank, the traditionally fighting Democrats would have produced the dullest political gathering in history.\[^{46}\] The Southerners were forced to abandon their maneuvers to block the Truman nomination when James Roosevelt, Mayor O'Dwyer of New York, and others climbed back into the Truman camp. They decided to concentrate on a minority plan to keep a strong civil rights declaration out of the platform.\[^{47}\] "The setback was clear, sharp and

\[^{43}\]Link, American Epoch, pp. 636-637.
\[^{44}\]Steinberg, Man From Missouri, p. 314.
\[^{46}\]Ibid.
complete, and showed the Truman forces in iron control of the National Committee at that time," wrote William S. White, and it represented a lost battle in the campaign to have the party cast the President aside. Governor Fielding Wright announced that the Mississippi delegation would walk out if the civil rights plank was not satisfactory to them. Rumors of a scheduled rump convention to be held in Birmingham later could not be confirmed, although at a caucus of revolters Governor Strom Thurmond, of South Carolina, cried out against Truman: "We have been betrayed and the guilty shall not go unpunished." 

Defeated in efforts to sway the platform committee to write a weak civil rights plank, the revolters from the old South prepared a states right plank. It was rushed before the convention by former Texas governor Dan Moody, who had charged that "some misguided people" were trying to subject the South to a "new era of Reconstruction, this time by federal law rather than federal bayonets." Insertion of the states right plank was refused by a vote of 925 to 309.

When the civil rights plank was presented it was met by a resolution to have it amended by adding more of the Truman civil rights proposals. The youthful Mayor of Minneapolis, Hubert Humphrey, led the floor fight and received a ten-minute ovation when he said:

We are confronted by emotionalism on all sides. President Truman had the courage to issue a new emancipation proclamation—not for any single religion, any single class, no racial group.

It is now time for the Democratic Party to get out of the shadow of states rights and walk forth—rightly and in the bright sunshine of human rights, march down the highroad of progressive democracy.53

The additions to the civil rights plank called for:

(1) The right of full and equal political participation (abolition of poll taxes in Federal elections).
(2) The right of equal opportunity of employment (FEPC).
(3) The right of security of person (federal anti-lynch law).
(4) The right of equal treatment in the service and defense of the nation (non-segregation in the armed services).

When it appeared that the strong civil rights plank had been refuted by a voice vote, California demanded a roll call. At that moment, before the roll call began, the entire Mississippi delegation of twenty-two, followed by thirteen Alabama delegates, marched down the center aisle and through the door. The strong civil rights plank was adopted by a margin of sixty-nine votes.54

53Ibid.
54Ibid.
Truman was nominated on the first roll call with Senator Alben Barkley of Kentucky, winning the vice-presidential place by acclamation. The eleven states of the old South gave Truman only thirteen of their two hundred and seventy-eight votes. It was expected that Truman, in his acceptance speech, would seek to appease the bitterness of the Southern revolt, but the bolt was ignored and the South was not mentioned. Harry Truman had more to do that night than to make an acceptance speech; he had to draw together the fragments of a broken Democratic party and mold them into unity, if possible, if he expected to stay in the White House. No one realized that more than Truman when he said: "The Democratic party was dispirited and dejected. I meant to give them something to cheer about and something to campaign for." The Missouri farmer had the new spirit of a chosen man; with it he made a "tough, fighting speech," that showed he meant to win. Truman "tore into the Eightieth Congress," as a Republican-controlled Congress that had failed to do its work, and then announced a special session of that Congress to be called for July 26th, to allow an opportunity.

55 Truman, Memoirs, II, 205.
57 Thomas, History as Heard, p. 347.
58 Truman, Memoirs, II, 206.
for enactment of the measures promised in the Republican platform. The action was censured as cheap politics but it was a fighting challenge to the Republicans.

The walk-out of the bolting Southern States-righters led them to Birmingham for a convention that was expected to "fire up political heat and noise rivaling the blast furnaces of near-by steel and iron mills." The meeting had been planned before the Philadelphia convention in case Truman was nominated. Governor J. Strom Thurmond, of South Carolina, was chosen unanimously as the Presidential candidate with Governor Feilding Wright of Mississippi, as the vice-Presidential candidate of the States Rights Party. Speaking to the six thousand delegates Thurmond denounced Truman's civil rights program as a "threat to make Southerners into a mongrel, inferior race by forced intermingling with Negroes." The planned strategy was to force the race into the House of Representatives.

59 Ibid., p. 207.
61 Ibid., July 16, 1948.
62 Ibid.
On July 26th, President Truman issued an executive order requiring an end to racial segregation in the armed services and setting up an FEPC for every government agency. The order set off a new wave of Southern reaction against Truman. The South claimed it was done only for political reasons and as the result of a statement by the Negro key-noter at Wallace's Progressive Party convention, who had said that Truman could wipe out racial segregation in the armed services "with the stroke of a pen." Other critics declared it had been done by Truman as the "dramatic campaign action of a man at bay."

The President issued the call for the special session of Congress on the day the Democratic convention ended, and Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenburg, assailed it as "the last hysterical gasp of an expiring administration." Early in the session the Republican leaders in Congress issued a one-thousand word joint statement which charged Truman with calling the extra session "solely as a political maneuver."

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63 Executive Orders 9980 and 9981, July 26, 1948, Federal Register, XIII, 4311, 4313.
65 Commonweal, XLVIII (August 6, 1948), 391.
67 Congressional Digest, XXVII (October, 1948), 227.
Truman presented his recommendations in a six-page message, which again included civil rights measures, on July 27th. Republican strategy was to present a motion to introduce the controversial anti-poll tax bill and let the Southern Senators filibuster. The plan worked so well that the filibuster was used on the motion to introduce the bill and kept going (with the occasional help of GOP members) for a week. Cloture motion could not apply as the motion was not debate on a bill, but only on the motion to introduce the bill. Finally, the Republicans withdrew the motion and Senator Robert Taft, majority leader, called for adjournment. The Congress adjourned on August 7th, without passing any civil rights legislation. The Republicans in Congress had followed the instructions of Dewey's campaign manager, Herbert Brownell, Jr., who had demanded a "sit-down strike" by the Republican Congressmen, saying the Republicans were not going to enact any of their 1948 platform until after Dewey took office following his election in November. Brownell was optimistic if not accurate in his prophecy, but the Republican leaders soon were aware that they had blundered.

68 Truman, Memoirs, II, 208.
69 Congressional Digest, XXVII (October, 1948), 227.
71 Steinberg, Man From Missouri, p. 320.
Another "do-nothing" session of the Eightieth Congress was what Truman wanted, and his "one-man crusade" began on Labor Day. He again confidently used the "whistle-stop" procedure, covering more than thirty-one thousand miles, and making more than three hundred fifty speeches to the twelve million people across the nation, who gathered in large city crowds or in small groups at the railroad stops to listen. Truman said:

I talked to them as human beings with real needs and feelings and fears. . . . individuals with interests for whom I, as President, had a genuine concern. Truman said the campaign was built on one issue, "the interests of the people, as represented by the Democrats, against the special interests, as represented by the Republicans and the record of the Eightieth Congress," and claimed he staked the Presidency on that one theme. He played it over and over, everywhere he went, and the people listened, laughed and voted for him.

Dewey campaigned by railroad train also, on the Victory Special. The Republican campaign was on a more sedate level than that of the Truman forces, it covered

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72 Truman, Memoirs, II, 218.
73 Ibid., p. 211.
74 Ibid., p. 209.
only half the mileage, and one hundred fewer speeches were made. Dewey made light charges against the Truman administration, called for "unity" and spoke in generalities. He passed up the "whistle-stops" and left the "grubby vote-chasing" to his opponent.\textsuperscript{75}

As the campaign gained speed and drew toward its close, the candidates kept talking, and the newspapers and public opinion polls continued to predict Truman's defeat. One major pollster stopped taking polls on the ground that "it was a waste of time to ask questions when everyone knew the answers."\textsuperscript{76} The final Truman speech was made in St. Louis, on October 30th, an off-the-cuff appeal judged the best of the campaign.\textsuperscript{77} The Dewey campaign ended the same night in a carnival air of victory at Madison Square Garden, in New York City, where it was said he "stood on the eve of victory."\textsuperscript{78} A final survey from newspapers in forty-eight states indicated GOP victory with 345 electoral votes to Truman's 105.\textsuperscript{79} On election night the early returns showed Truman leading, but the commentators and the

\textsuperscript{76} Herbert Agar, The Price of Power (Chicago, 1957), p. 82.
\textsuperscript{77} Dallas Morning News, October 31, 1948.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} New York Times, October 31, 1948.
experts forecast it would swing back to Dewey by morning, and the Chicago Tribune put out an extra edition with a twelve-column headline proclaiming:

DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN

The final returns showed that Truman had carried twenty-eight states with 304 electoral votes, or a victory margin of 38 votes. Thurmond, for the Dixiecrats, had polled 40 electoral votes from South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana.

No one could explain the upset, but a national radio commentator said: "Our nation today, may well salute the greatest political gladiator in history." 82 Eleanor Roosevelt said: "President Truman was re-elected to the surprise of practically everybody except President Truman." 83 Harry Truman said only that he felt deeply the responsibility, and added: "All efforts will be devoted to the cause of peace in the world and the prosperity and

80 Goldman, Crucial Decade, p. 87.
81 Truman, Memoirs, II, 221.
82 Thomas, History as Heard, p. 353.
83 Eleanor Roosevelt, On My Own (Garden City, 1949), p. 92.
happiness of our people at home." The voice of one minority group agreed with the President and stated:
"For the American people, the year 1948 marked a return to the unfinished business of expanding their democracy."

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CHAPTER V

AN INEVITABLE CAUSE

As this study has shown, with the advent of the Truman administration in 1945, the movement toward fulfillment of the inherent rights of individuals was weaving itself into the pattern of life in America. Two World Wars plus the socialized aspects of the recovery program which followed the Great Depression of the thirties gave it impetus. By 1948, it had become an imponderable that pressed into the political scene and demanded recognition. There was no retreat, thus, inevitably it had to be considered in the processes of democratic government in the United States. And not to be ignored was the fact that, though submerged, it weighed on the moral conscience of the nation, even while civil liberties were being denied in some places.

It fell the lot of Harry Truman to inherit the civil rights issue when he was thrust into the Presidency, whether by political accident (as suggested by Dewey in the 1948 campaign), or by Divine Providence. If it appeared to become his political prerogative, surely it would have been as senseless to believe that Truman could have disregarded

\(^1\)Agar, *Price of Power*, p. 83.
civil rights problems, as to believe that Lincoln could have ignored slavery, or Franklin Roosevelt the Depression. Indeed, there was comparable similarity between the revolutionary issues of Lincoln's day and those of Truman's time. Both were largely centered around the Negro minority, both involved sectional differences, both were complicated by emotionalism and both had taken on national significance.

Truman made no attempt to shun the controversial civil rights problems. He once expressed the opinion that from 1930 to 1953, this country had "the greatest social and economic revolution in its history without violence," and that it was done according to the Constitution, in an orderly use of the ballot by the majority, and without curtailment of the rights of the individual. That is why he considered his climactic election to the Presidency, with a Democratic Congressional majority, in the crucial year of 1948, as a mandate of the people to continue his program for governmental protection of individual rights. A Washington editorial writer commented in December, 1948, that the question of whether Truman would meet a forceful coalition of southern conservatives and Republicans in the new Congress depended on whether he would "tread lightly" on the civil rights issues or not. The writer added that if Truman pushed that part of his program vigorously with

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2Truman, Memoirs, II, 271.
all the rigid perseverance of which he was capable the opposition would gain considerable control.\textsuperscript{3} Any doubt as to Truman's action on that score was soon dispelled.

To the new Eighty-first Congress, in the State of the Union Message of January, 1949, he again pleaded for the enactment of the civil rights proposals made to the Eightieth Congress. Again the belief was stated that no unfair prejudice or artificial distinctions should bar any United States citizen from an education, from good health or from holding a job within his capabilities.\textsuperscript{4}

By May, 1949, the administration had managed to get all of Truman's civil rights bills introduced in both Houses of Congress.\textsuperscript{5} The expected coalition of conservative Democrats from the South and Republicans had materialized, however, and again prevented Congressional action. Administration efforts to alter Senate rules to make it easier to limit debate only boomeranged, bringing a more restrictive rule requiring a two-thirds vote of Senate membership for cloture.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{3}Congressional Digest, XXVII (December, 1948), 291.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Congressional Record, Eighty-first Congress, 1st session, LXXXIV, pt. 1, 76.
\item \textsuperscript{5}S. J. Spingarn to Clark Clifford, May 17, 1949, Truman Papers, O. P. 596.
\end{itemize}
Again in 1950, President Truman requested consideration of civil rights measures. A White House communication showed that numerous bills covering the proposals of February, 1948, had been introduced, but the only proposal that had been adopted since that time was the Japanese-American Evacuation bill.  

Each year thereafter Truman included appeals for civil rights action in his annual message to Congress, and each year he failed to get the requested legislation. In 1951 and 1952, his promotion of civil rights laws in Congress was minimized by the struggle in Korea, although in both of those years he informed the Congress of civil rights progress achieved by the executive branch and through other agencies, and reminded the members that the force of federal laws was indicated for continued progress in that field. 

Finally, in his farewell message to Congress in January, 1953, he refrained from legislative suggestions, properly leaving that for his successor, but in the message he said: "There has been a great awakening of the American conscience on the issues of civil rights." He said the barriers of prejudice were coming down, and he reviewed the record of gains in individual liberties during the administration.

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6 Joseph G. Feeney to Leroy Chandler, March 1, 1950, ibid.
He mentioned progress across the nation toward the "promises of equal freedom for all," in the Armed Forces and civil service, and in the areas of higher education, residential housing, transportation, labor and voting practices. It was well-known by the populace that such progress had come from other sources than federal legislation. Much of it had been accomplished through executive action by that "uncommon man" of the common people and for the common people.

Today, a decade since his last year in office, conjecture is still heard as to the reasons behind his civil rights program and its particular influence on the 1948 election. It is well to examine first the personal history, background and characteristics of "that man Truman," as he was sometimes spoken of in derision, during the period of hate engendered by his enemies. Truman came from a modest background of Missouri farm and small-town life. In his book, Mr. Citizen, written after his Presidency, he told how he was impressed early in life, by the plight of some minority groups when he witnessed their miseries during his boyhood. He remembered the frightened faces of Negroes fleeing from a burning cross in his home town of Independence, Missouri, a section of the country that was segregated.

7 Congressional Record, Eighty-third Congress, 1st session, LXXXXIX, pt. 1, 236.
and entirely southern in its attitudes. He said he felt disapproval of the Ku Klux Klan at that time and had ever since then. By personal experience he learned of the lot of the underpaid wage earners, and their privations left an imprint on his memory. He claimed a special sympathy for those who lacked the social and economic advantages of privileged groups and never lost sight of their problems. He stated in his Memoirs, that he had been "fiercely partisan in politics and always militantly liberal," and would remain that way as long as he lived.

He rose to the Senate from a county judgeship through the Pendergast machine and never denied it. A clue to his future political practices is in the story of his second day in the Senate, January 4, 1935, when he listened to Roosevelt's annual message. He was pleased with FDR's call for basic reforms to replace the emergency relief measures of his administration. He felt then, he said, that the program Roosevelt enunciated was: "... for the welfare and security of all classes of Americans," and that he could support it wholeheartedly, for he had tried to put the same type program into effect on a local level.

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8 Harry S. Truman, Mr. Citizen (New York, 1960), p. 89.
9 Ibid., p. 113.
10 Truman, Memoirs, I, 143.
Truman once declared that the President was representative of the "whole" nation and the only lobbyist that all the millions of people in the country had in Washington. He asserted that made it necessary for the Chief Executive to understand people, to understand the government, and to be "a good politician."\(^{11}\)

It is obvious that Truman came to the office of President with a philosophy of his own that bent toward the welfare of the "average" citizen, and that he would exercise that philosophy by political means, as the considered method applicable in a democracy. Jonathan Daniels, who worked closely with Truman, and of long experience in Washington, said: "Truman was nominated by men speculating beyond the death of Roosevelt who knew what they wanted but didn't know what they were getting."\(^{12}\)

It has been bantered that all Americans saw Truman as having put either sugar or poison in their tea.\(^{13}\) This points up the fact that Truman was a man who took a firm stand and left the dividing to the people. He did stand by his civil rights program from beginning to end. It is clear that it became a political tool in the 1948 election,

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\(^{11}\) Truman, *Truman Speaks*, p. 5.

\(^{12}\) Daniels, *Men of Independence*, p. 234.

but Truman used it openly and at the same time remained dedicated to its concepts. Only the opposition party failed to see how it fell naturally into the double category of political expedient and reputable Presidential policy. Otherwise the Republicans would not have tossed it back to Truman in the Eightieth Congress.

When interviewed about his civil rights program the ex-President acknowledged that there was little hope of getting the whole program through in 1948, but insisted that it needed to be presented as a whole at that time, that it was the result of the non-partisan work of his Civil Rights Committee which he felt to be representative of the whole populace, and that he always felt that it would eventually be enacted. As to motivation, he said the basic motive was "to do something for all the people." ¹⁴

The Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960, passed during the Eisenhower Administration, are plainly modified versions of the original Truman Civil Rights program. Truly, Truman did present a program for the future, and although clouded at its inception by partisan politics, it is withstanding the crucible of time.

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