Forging the Civil Rights Frontier: How Truman's Committee Set the Liberal Agenda for Reform 1947-1965

Edith S. Riehm
Georgia State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/history_diss

Recommended Citation
doi: https://doi.org/10.57709/2766440
At the close of 1946, a year marked by domestic white-on-black violence, Harry S. Truman, in a dramatic move, established the President’s Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR). Five years before, his predecessor Franklin D. Roosevelt had formed the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), under pressure from civil rights groups mobilized against racial discrimination in the defense industry. The FEPC was the first major federal civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. However, when race riots later erupted in cities across the country in 1943, Roosevelt ignored his staff’s recommendation to appoint a national race relations committee. Instead, he agreed to a “maypole” committee, which was, in actuality, a decentralized network of individuals, including Philleo Nash, whose purpose was to anticipate and diffuse urban racial tensions in order to avert further race riots. Superficially, Truman's PCCR seemed to resemble Roosevelt's rather conservative race relations strategy of appointing a committee rather than taking direct
action under the authority of the federal government. But, as this project will argue, Truman's PCCR represented a major, historical change in the approach to civil rights that would have a profound effect on activists, such as Dorothy Tilly and Frank Porter Graham, and the movement itself. Where FDR's committees were created to avoid further racial confrontations, Truman’s committee invited and ignited controversy. Its groundbreaking report, *To Secure These Rights (TSTR)*, unequivocally declared the federal government as the guardian of all Americans’ civil rights. In essence, Truman’s PCCR elevated the civil rights dialogue to a national level by re-casting the civil rights issue as an American problem rather than just a black-American problem. Moreover, *TSTR* attacked segregation directly, and challenged the federal government to take the lead by immediately desegregating the armed services. These radical recommendations came only six years after a reluctant FDR formed the FEPC and six and one-half years before the Unites States’ Supreme Court’s landmark ruling, *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* and the ensuing backlash. Thus, Truman’s PCCR and *TSTR*, in 1947, forged a new “civil rights frontier.”

INDEX WORDS: Civil rights, Human rights, Truman, Roosevelt, To Secure These Rights, President’s Committee on Civil Rights, Dorothy Tilly, Frank P. Graham, Philleo Nash, Post-war civil rights
FORGING THE CIVIL RIGHTS FRONTIER: HOW TRUMAN’S COMMITTEE SET THE
LIBERAL AGENDA FOR REFORM 1947-1965

by

EDITH SHELBY RIEHM

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
2012
FORGING THE CIVIL RIGHTS FRONTIER: HOW TRUMAN’S COMMITTEE SET THE
LIBERAL AGENDA FOR REFORM 1947-1965

by

EDITH SHELBY RIEHM

Committee Chair: Michelle Brattain
Committee: Clifford M. Kuhn
Glenn T. Eskew

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
May 2012
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the person that helped me through every step of this journey with unconditional encouragement, support, and love - my husband, Charlie Riehm.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in the Civil Rights Movement began in 1987, when my mother, Margaret E. Holbrook, insisted that I join her and my father, Martin E. Holbrook, in watching a new PBS documentary, entitled “Eyes on the Prize.” She thought it would be important for me to watch this series because she believed it was a critical element of the country’s history and one that I had not experienced. My parents were involved in local politics and met many interesting and involved people. Their activism and the company they kept, coupled with the diverse population of the metro New York City area, exposed me and my siblings to people from all walks of life – rich, poor, black, white, people of all religions, national origins, and races. My parents’ examples and the environment in which they raised me laid the foundation for my future interest in civil rights. Over the years, my parents’ influence has served me well and, while they are no longer living, I still thank them each and every day.

This journey has been longer than anticipated, yet one that I have enjoyed immensely and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to many people. First, I must thank my undergraduate advisor, Dr. Daniel J. Wilson of Muhlenberg College. When I decided to return for an advanced history degree, he agreed to write a letter of recommendation on my behalf. At the time I asked him if I should concentrate on the latest trends in history in order to be more marketable in my future job search. His advice was straightforward: he encouraged me to find a topic that I loved, which would ensure I would finish the program. As I had done many times as an undergraduate, I took his advice. Next, I also asked my “corporate world” manager at the time, Vicki Hoffman Robinson, to write me a letter of recommendation. In the short time I worked for Vicki (2.5 years or so) we became very good friends, and I learned a great deal from her – especially about
how to go after what you want to do. I owe Vicki a huge thank you since she inspired me to look beyond what I was doing to the future, and to focus on what I was meant to do.

I first had to get a master’s degree in history in order to qualify for Georgia State’s doctorate program. Dr. John Matthews was the graduate advisor at the time, and as I completed the course work for my master’s degree, I selected him as my thesis advisor. When I was searching for a thesis topic, he thoughtfully guided me to Emory University’s Special Collections department, headed by his wife, Dr. Linda Matthews, and suggested I take a look at the collection of women’s manuscript collections. I hit the proverbial jackpot at Emory and found four female white civil rights activists about whom to write: Dorothy Tilly, Helen Bullard, Frances Pauley, and Connie Curry. I quickly amassed enough information to write hefty chapters on all, except Tilly. When I submitted my paltry 25-page chapter on Tilly to Dr. Matthews, he reminded me that he was expecting 50-page chapters on each of my four subjects. When I told him I was having trouble finding information about Tilly, he pointed me in the direction of the Atlanta University Center, where I would find the Southern Regional Council Papers. He then confided to me that of all of my thesis subjects, he suspected that Dorothy Tilly was the most important – and that was correct. From that point on, I found more information on Tilly than I could have ever imagined, and I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to publish about her and her important work three times. She also figures prominently in this dissertation. Therefore I must thank Dr. Matthews for inspiring me to write about white women civil rights activists and for his expert guidance in my quest for information about Dorothy Tilly.

At the time of my master’s thesis defense, a recent hire to Georgia State, Dr. Michelle Brattain, agreed to be the second reader for my thesis. When Dr. Matthews retired, Michelle became my advisor and she has become so much more than that over the years. She has been a
teacher, colleague, mentor, confidante, cheerleader, and wonderful friend to me over the last twelve years. Michelle has read and commented on all of my publications, and I am indebted to her for the time she has generously given me and for the improvements she has made to my work, while she has pushed me to become a better historian. Her encouragement to publish, apply for grants, apply for teaching jobs and, in general, to put myself “out there” as a historian has been an invaluable gift, so I am very grateful to her for all she has done to help me toward the Ph.D. degree and my career as a historian.

This dissertation and my historian skills have also been significantly enhanced through the influence of the other members my dissertation committee: Dr. Clifford M. Kuhn and Dr. Glenn T. Eskew. I have trulybenefitted from the assistance, guidance, and encouragement given to me from these two scholars over the years. Dr. Kuhn spent a great deal of time reviewing an earlier draft of this dissertation, which helped me tremendously in preparing it for the final steps, and for which I am greatly indebted to him. I am also thankful for Dr. Eskew’s assistance in this experience and for his guidance and support over the years, which included providing me with a publishing opportunity in the *New Georgia Encyclopedia.*

The many others who have helped me with this dissertation are the dedicated staffs at the various libraries and archives in which I performed my research. First I want to thank the director, Dr. Michael J. Devine, staff, librarians, and archivists at the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum in Independence, Missouri. In 2007 I was awarded a research grant by the Truman Library and the two weeks I spent there were most enjoyable and productive as I researched the Philleo Nash Papers. Special thanks to Liz Safly, who befriended me during those two wintry weeks and Randy Sowell, who was extremely helpful.
While working on this degree, I have spent many of my weekends at the Robert Woodruff Library at the Atlanta University Center, reviewing microfilm from the Southern Regional Council papers in the Special Collections department and later, the Media department. Many thanks to the librarians and staff there who assisted me. I also spent a great deal of time at Emory University’s Manuscript and Rare Book Library (MARBL). Its librarians, archivists, and staff were also very helpful to me as I spent many Saturdays in their reading room going through the Dorothy Tilly Papers. The librarians at Winthrop University’s Dacus Library also deserve thanks as I spent several days there many years ago after discovering a second Dorothy Tilly archive bequeathed to Winthrop by the late historian, Dr. Arnold Shankman. Dr. Shankman was the first historian to devote entire scholarly articles to Dorothy Tilly and her important work. His writings on Tilly provided a firm foundation for future works about her by other historians who would come after him.

I was fortunate to spend a week researching the Frank Porter Graham Papers at the Louis Round Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and want to thank those librarians and archivists for their assistance and hospitality during my stay. I am grateful also to the following: the Alabama Department of Archives and History in Montgomery, Alabama; the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson, Mississippi; the Pitts Theological Library at Emory University; Georgia State University’s Law Library, and Vanderbilt University’s Jean and Alexander Heard Library. All the staff and archivists with whom I came in contact at all of these institutions were most helpful to me as I conducted research.

I must also thank Dorothy Tilly’s grandson Eben Tilly, and his wife, Nancy Tilly, who allowed me and a few colleagues to interview them for a documentary film in 2007. In return, they provided me with copies of many documents, photos, and letters from the Tilly family.
Over the past decade, I have had several conversations with Dr. Leslie Dunbar, who was the Executive Director of the Southern Regional Council during the early 1960s, and who knew and worked with Dorothy Tilly. He has been most generous with his time and has been patient with me, as I have solicited his inputs about Tilly and her work several times over the past ten years.

My years at Georgia State were filled with hard work and also a lot of fun and camaraderie thanks to the many friendships I made in the History department’s “cube farm” in the General Classroom Building. We brought to graduate school many years of experience from the business world, which sometimes helped and sometimes hindered us as we navigated through graduate school as doctoral students. Through the help and advice of our good friend and mentor, Dr. Larry Youngs, we channeled our energy, enthusiasm, and at times our frustration into some very productive and collegial years in which we resurrected the Association of Georgia State University Historians (AGSUH) organization and also formed a peer dissertation review committee called, “For the Love of God, Make it End”, tagged with the acronym, FLOGME. My sincere thanks to these very talented historians, friends, and colleagues, many of whom read earlier chapters of this dissertation and inspired me greatly along the way: Robert Woodrum, Jennifer Dickey, Fakhri Haghani, Mike Stevens, Steve Blankenship, Dana Wiggins, Aubrey Underwood, John Fairris, Joe Meeler, Shannon Bontrager, Charmayne Peterson, Joel McMahon, Heather Lucas, Eric Kleist, Abou Bamba, and Dexter Blackmon. At Georgia State, my colleagues and I were extremely fortunate to have been taught and mentored by some of the finest historians: Michelle Brattain, Cliff Kuhn, Glenn Eskew, Jacqueline Rouse, Diane Willen, Denise Davidson, Mohammed Hassen Ali, Hugh Hudson, Chuck Steffen, Joe Perry, Ian Fletcher, Richard Laub, and Wendy Venet. We also benefitted immensely from the support of the department’s excellent staff including Paula Sorrell and Carolyn Whiters.
I have many friends outside of the Georgia State community as well. While I have been on this odyssey they have patiently waited as my spare time has mainly been consumed working on coursework, papers, teaching, publications, grant applications, research trips, and a lot of reading and writing. Each of them has always been extremely supportive and I look forward to spending a lot more time with them now that this chapter of my life ends. I could not have succeeded in this milestone without them and they deserve my thanks for putting up with my many absences these past years: Judy Straeffer, Debbie Farrell, Karen Jeter, Cindy and Ed Flynn, Patty Coury, Meryl and Bob Wilkerson, Al and Barbara Karnitz, Bob and Patricia Pritchard, Linda Hayes and Chuck Stallworth, Vicki Hoffman Robinson, Margaret Magnatta, Jane Holbrook, Janet and Jim Feeley, Lorraine and Ed Wais, Paul and Asta Moore (who carefully proofread this entire dissertation), Elaine and Bob Frassanito, Dave and Sandy Huarte, Janet and Tom Hirons, and Pat and Mike Henderson, Charlotte and Bill Berens, Rita and Ekkehard Wittig, Fred and Ali Schaad, Mary Schmitt, Jack Chandler, and Mark Bridgers.

I am fortunate to have the love and support of two wonderful and large families: the Holbrooks and the Riehms. I thank them all for inspiring me and supporting me through this endeavor. In particular, I received much support and encouragement from my siblings, Catherine Hettrich, Jean Knudson, Veronica Hicks, Charlie Holbrook, Robert Holbrook, John Holbrook, Richard Holbrook, and Michael Holbrook. On the Riehm side, my sisters-in-law, Weda Riehm and the late Joan Riehm and her husband, Melvin E. Greer were especially supportive. It is without a doubt that I could not have accomplished what I did during my tenure at graduate school without this very extensive support network of family and friends.
There has been one person who has been by my side throughout this entire journey and that person is my husband, Charlie Riehm, to whom I owe the largest debt of gratitude. He has been my cheerleader, editor, whip-cracker, and has even coined a new word during the dissertation writing phase of my degree work: the verb, “to dissertate” - meaning to keep plugging away at one’s dissertation. Many times on a weekend when I was taking a break from working on this project, he would catch me away from my desk and ask me in a loud voice, “Why aren’t you dissertating?!” When I made the decision to return to graduate school for a doctorate, Charlie supported that decision fully. My work on this degree was a major part of our marriage the past ten years. Charlie proofread every word I wrote for every publication and for many versions of this dissertation. I could not have achieved this accomplishment without his honesty, patience and unconditional love and support.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................. v

INTRODUCTION ........................................................................ 1

CHAPTER 1: FROM SOUTHERN HUMAN RELATIONS TO NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS .......................................................... 8

1.1 Introduction ........................................................................... 8

1.2 The Rise and Demise of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation ............ 10

1.3 Women’s Division of the Methodist Church .............................................. 13

1.4 The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching .......... 18

1.5 The Great Depression and the New Deal ................................................. 20

1.6 The Report on the Economic Conditions of the South ................................ 22

1.7 The Southern Conference for Human Welfare ........................................... 26

1.8 From Southern Liberalism to Modern Racial Liberalism ............................... 30

1.9 World War II, the FEPC, and the Bureau of Intelligence ............................ 36

1.10 The Maypole Committee ..................................................................... 43

1.11 Transitioning between the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations ............ 48

1.12 Words, Missiles, and Blows: Post-War Racial Violence ............................. 51

1.13 The Federal Government Takes a Stand: The Formation of the PCCR ....... 55


1.15 Conclusion ................................................................................ 68
##CHAPTER 2: SOUTHERN DISSENT ON THE PCCR

2.1 Introduction................................................................. 70

2.2 The PCCR’s “Enormous Problem”.................................... 72

2.3 Tilly’s Predictions .......................................................... 85

2.4 An Anti-South and Unbalanced Report ................................ 89

2.5 Desegregation in Education – The Sticking Point .................. 94

2.6 A Gracious Out .............................................................. 105

2.7 Southern Traitors and Dupes ............................................ 110

2.8 Conclusion......................................................................... 120

##CHAPTER 3: MRS. TILLY’S MOVEMENT

3.1 Introduction....................................................................... 124

3.2 Early Inspirations ................................................................ 126

3.3 From Human Rights to Civil Rights and Back Again ............... 128

3.4 The Fellowship of the Concerned ....................................... 136

3.5 From Interracial Conferences to Interracial Activism ............ 139

3.6 The Southern School Desegregation Crisis and the South’s Shock Absorbers .... 147

3.7 FOC Human Rights Activism and Civil Rights Activism .......... 159

3.8 Conclusion......................................................................... 162
CHAPTER 4: DROPPING A MATCH INTO THE DRY AND PRICKLY UNDERBRUSH OF SOUTHERN PRIDE AND FEAR: POLITICAL FALLOUT INSTIGATED BY THE PCCR ................................................................. 166

4.1 Introduction.................................................................................................................. 166
4.2 Graham Enters the National Discourse on Race Relations................................. 169
4.3 Southern Politicians React Against “To Secure These Rights” ......................... 177
4.4 Truman Takes the PCCR Recommendations to Congress................................. 182
4.5 Southern Politicians React to Truman’s Message about PCCR Recommendations 188
4.6 The Brief Career of Senator Frank Porter Graham ............................................. 201
4.7 Graham and United States Civil Rights ................................................................. 210
4.8 Conclusion.................................................................................................................. 213

CHAPTER 5: SEEDTIME FOR MASSIVE RESISTANCE ............................................. 217

5.1 Introduction.................................................................................................................. 217
5.2 White Resistance and Violence Pre- and Post-TSTR......................................... 220
5.3 Resurgence of Klan Activity ..................................................................................... 224
5.4 Rolling Out To Secure These Rights....................................................................... 227
5.5 The Southern Press Reacts to “176 Pages of Social Dynamite” ....................... 234
5.6 The Southern Press Helps Plant the Seed of Resistance.................................... 251
5.7 Conclusion.................................................................................................................. 264

CONCLUSION: MANY A TANGLE AND MANY A BACK-SET ......................... 268
INTRODUCTION

Decades after World War II ended, Robert Tye, a white American World War II veteran, who was among those servicemen to enter the concentration camps in Europe at war’s end, spoke with Barbara Howard, a National Public Radio correspondent. Tye recalled his feelings after the triumphant victory over the Nazis and the traumatic and emotional experience of seeing the devastation brought on by the Nazi racist regime. Tye remembered that in the evenings, after returning to base camp, he and his friends would discuss these events over coffee at the USO. Despite seeing the effects of the Nazi’s racism and genocide, they were optimistic about the future and, specifically American society. Tye remembered their optimism and

…how wonderful it was going to be now that we had eliminated bigotry. We figured that nobody would dare be a bigot now because he would automatically be associating himself with the Nazis. It would be great to go back to a country now where nobody would be bigoted.¹

Tye’s sentiments and those of his colleagues were echoed by many who saw World War II as a moral battle of good against evil. Against the backdrop of a more progressive nation, informed by Gunnar Myrdal’s popular study, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, and as the horrifying details of what racism had done to the population of European Jews were revealed, the logical conclusion for many was that this war would end all racism.² If it did not end racism globally, many believed racism would at the very least be ended in the

United States, which had emerged from the conflict as the bulwark of democracy and the new leader of the free world. “Of course,” Tye concluded sadly in his interview, “them things didn’t turn out that way.”

Speaking in the 1990s, Tye had the benefit of looking back through the lens of memory and recalled the fleeting feeling of optimism in the early post-war era, which was followed quickly by decades of struggle associated with the civil rights movement. Hatred, bigotry, and racism were prominent and deep-rooted characteristics in America’s social, economic, and political landscape. Thus the optimistic belief that bigotry was vanquished began to quickly erode as World War II ended, and veterans of all races returned back to the United States. Many African Americans returned to the South, having fought and won the war against racist enemies, only to face the familiar and entrenched southern brand of racism and discrimination under segregation.

One of the natural phenomena, described as a law of physics centuries ago by Sir Isaac Newton, is that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Human nature sometimes mirrors this natural behavior. Historian Glenn Feldman argues that the civil rights movement is “actually … best understood as a two-sided coin: the drive for civil rights and the militant reaction against it…. It is difficult, though, to understand either side fully without reference to the other.”

Since the mid-1990s, some scholars have accepted the *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* Supreme Court decision as the catalyst that elicited widespread white backlash against civil rights efforts. However, recommendations to eliminate segregation made by Harry S. Truman’s President’s Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR) in October 1947

---

3 *The Best of NPR: Eyewitness to History.*
also ignited a severe backlash to federal involvement in civil rights matters. This reaction portended the firestorm that would ensue after the Brown decision and far outstripped the reaction to President Roosevelt’s Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). Moreover, in the late 1940s, the PCCR facilitated the civil rights movement’s adoption of a more coherent and definable identity with specific federal goals, ones that we ordinarily associate with the 1960s. This shift – toward desegregation and federal action - simultaneously propelled the movement toward success and provided a clearer target for a galvanizing opposition.

Despite the acknowledgment by many historians that the civil rights movement was a much longer process, beginning well before the 1960s, scholars with a few notable exceptions have paid little attention to the PCCR and its report, To Secure These Rights (TSTR). William Juhnke’s 1974 dissertation, “Creating a New Charter of Freedom: The Organization and Operation of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights, 1946-1948,” is the most extensive work here-tofore on the PCCR. Juhnke details the events leading to Truman’s formation of the committee, how the committee was organized, the difficulty in drafting the final report and, to a lesser extent, some initial reaction to the final report. Juhnke also reveals Graham’s and Tilly’s dissent. In his conclusion, Juhnke states that TSTR “stood for a generation as the basic document for civil

\[6\] For more on the FEPC, see Merl E. Reed, Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement: The President’s Committee on Fair Employment Practice 1941-1946, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991).

rights reform.” Juhnke’s exposure of Frank Porter Graham’s and Dorothy Tilly’s dissent amidst all the other persuasive opinions in Committee meetings begs for more research into their rationale for dissent and the trajectory of their careers in the post-PCCR era.

In 1998, Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne co-authored *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*. In this work, Lawson’s essay, “The View from the Nation,” suggests that *TSTR* “sketched out the liberal agenda on civil rights for the next twenty years.” In 2004, Lawson edited a reprint of *To Secure These Rights* with an introduction and helpful bibliography. Shortly after, in 2005, William E. Leuchtenburg published *The White House Looks South: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Lyndon B. Johnson*. Lawson and Leuchtenburg only briefly discuss the PCCR and *TSTR*, yet they hint at the long-range significance of both with respect to 1960s civil rights legislation. Michael R. Gardner also alludes to the connection between the PCCR and the broader civil rights movement when he describes *TSTR* as a “blueprint” for change.

The majority of scholars who have written about Truman do mention the PCCR and *TSTR*, but they confine their discussion to the limited scope and timeframe of the Truman presidency. To a far greater extent, historians have focused on Truman’s motives in taking a contro-

---


versial stand supporting civil rights. In 2003, for example, Carol Anderson argued that the PCCR’s report was little more than a publicity stunt “used repeatedly to counter Soviet criticism” of segregation and racial violence. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall’s 2005 article, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” ignores the PCCR and TSTR. Yet in the article Hall urges scholars to extend the study of civil rights beyond the "classical" period in the early 1960s to understand the deep roots and alternative strategies that ultimately contributed to the movement. Glenda Gilmore’s magisterial work, Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950, includes a smattering of references to TSTR within the context of other “Cold War casualties” that were drowned by a “wave of anti-Communism” in the late 1940s.

Although the PCCR and TSTR have been marginalized in the literature on civil rights, this study demonstrates that both the Committee and its report were emblematic of the critical shift in liberal thinking occurring during the 1940s and the illiberal reaction to it. From the late 1940s, liberals increasingly focused on new goals articulated by TSTR: dismantling segregation and protecting Americans’ civil rights. At the same time, a rising wave of resistance against the nascent civil rights movement emerged. This opposition worked to shore up support for segregation and undermine the growing involvement of the federal government in race relations that had begun with the FEPC. In order to address this gap in the historiography, and to demonstrate


For more on the shift of American and southern liberalism, see for example, Numan V. Bartley, The New South, 1945-1980 The Story of the South’s Modernization, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,
the pivotal importance of the PCCR to the history of the civil rights movement, this dissertation will examine how race relations changed in the White House in the decade leading to the PCCR’s creation, the source and context of the new approach to race relations that the committee fostered, the impact it had on the two key southern participants and their subsequent civil rights activism at the state and local level, and the resistance that its report, TSTR, galvanized.

Just as the civil rights movement witnessed unprecedented gains in the 1940s, so did the reaction against it. Although massive resistance to the civil rights movement is normally associated with the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* Supreme Court decision, advances in civil rights even as far back as the 1930s had been challenged, and this pattern continued and strengthened in the 1940s. This dissertation will argue that Truman’s PCCR represented a major historical change in the approach to civil rights that would have a profound effect on activists and the movement itself. Its groundbreaking report unequivocally declared the federal government as the guardian of all Americans’ civil rights—a critical point first enunciated in *The Declaration of Independence.* In essence, Truman’s PCCR elevated the civil rights dialogue to a national level by recasting the civil rights issue as an American problem rather than just a black-American problem. Moreover, *TSTR* attacked segregation directly and challenged the federal government to take the lead by immediately desegregating the armed services. These radical recommendations came only six years after a reluctant Franklin D. Roosevelt formed the FEPC, and six and one-half years before the United States Supreme Court’s landmark ruling, *Brown v. the*

---


15 The “Declaration of Independence” was the original document in the United States that held government responsible for securing rights. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men.”
Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas and the ensuing backlash.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, in 1947 Truman’s PCCR and its report, \textit{TSTR}, forged a new “civil rights frontier.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} The PCCR’s entire report can be found in Lawson, ed., \textit{To Secure These Rights: The Report of President Harry S Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights\ldots}; For more on the reaction to the \textit{Brown} decision, see Klarman.

\textsuperscript{17} The term “civil rights frontier” is used by the PCCR in its report to describe “the bad side” of the United States’ “record” with respect to civil rights, see Lawson, ed., \textit{To Secure These Rights: The Report of President Harry S Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights}, p. 46. I am using the term in a more traditional sense in that within this context it is meant to connote new, unchartered territory.
CHAPTER 1: FROM SOUTHERN HUMAN RELATIONS TO NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS

1.1 Introduction

Between 1938 and 1948, the South as a region became the subject of national, and specifically executive, concern. During this ten-year period, Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman had identified the South as a regional problem that was worthy of American and federal attention and even intervention. In 1938 Roosevelt labeled the South “the nation’s number one economic problem.”¹ Almost ten years later in October 1947, Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights reinforced Gunnar Myrdal’s conclusion from his groundbreaking 1944 study, An American Dilemma, in which he declared the South to be the nation’s number one moral problem.² This change in characterization of the South from an economic problem to a moral problem marks a critical shift in thoughts about race relations and liberalism in America. Moreover Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights would prove to be the fulcrum for the federal government to embrace a more assertive and proactive role in ensuring civil rights for all citizens.

This chapter examines the advent of southern liberalism and the interracial movement in the interwar era by looking at several relevant organizations: the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, the Women’s Division of the Methodist Church, the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, the Committee on Economic Conditions in the South, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, and the Southern Regional Council. It then explores the transition of race relations policies and efforts in the 1930s from the Great Depression and World

War II under the Roosevelt administration to civil rights in the early post-war and nascent Cold War eras under Truman, culminating in the creation of Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights and its seminal report *To Secure These Rights*. In doing so, this chapter examines how these policies were informed by southern liberals, human relations activists and organizations, and the Left, and also how northern organizations, the Great Depression, the New Deal, and World War II also influenced race relations policy at the executive level. Additionally, Gunnar Myrdal’s ground-breaking work *An American Dilemma* will be used to illustrate how, in the 1940s, ideas about the causes of prejudice shifted and ideas for combatting and curing prejudice also changed.

Myrdal’s work espoused a far more direct tactic in confronting the problem through assimilating blacks directly into American society and then educating non-minorities (whites) to elicit understanding and tolerance.³

During the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, these presidents did not simply make declarations of existing liberal beliefs about the South. Rather, during periods of crisis such as the Great Depression, domestic racial tension during World War II, and the domestic white-on-black violence that characterized the early post-war period, these executives empowered groups of experts to bring them the “facts” and offer recommendations about solving the regional problem. The ten-year period 1938-1948 is book-ended by two such groups: Roosevelt’s Conference on Economic Conditions of the South, which in 1938 published its landmark *Report on the Economic Conditions in the South (RECS)* and the President’s Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR) under Truman, which published the groundbreaking *To Secure These Rights (TSTR)* in 1947. *TSTR* furnished Truman with the salient points of his civil rights message to Congress in February, 1948. Moreover, these two groups and their respective reports are emblematic of the dra-

---
matic shift in the federal government's approach and involvement in race relations during the critical years spanning 1938 to 1948.

1.2 The Rise and Demise of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation

After an increase of white-on-black violence that erupted during the post-World War I era, a select group of educated and progressive southern white men that included Will W. Alexander, whose affiliations were mainly with the YMCA and the Methodist Church, formed an organization devoted to improving understanding between the races. The Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) headquartered in Atlanta but funded with northern money, invited members of Atlanta’s African American elite to join the CIC a few months after incorporation.\(^4\) The founders of this organization birthed “the interracial movement,” and together these southern moderates and liberals worked to address racial tensions in the South, without the need for federal intervention.\(^5\) In the 1920s, the CIC allowed women to join, and high-ranking members of the Women’s Division of the Methodist Church created a female division within the CIC. During its first decade, the CIC expanded to several southern states, instituting field offices in which state-level interracial committees were formed, representing over fifty percent of southern counties.\(^6\) At its zenith, the number of these regional offices numbered approximately eight hundred.\(^7\) The tradition forged by the activists within the CIC and informed by the Women’s Division Methodist Church included interracial work in an effort to forge understanding and empathy across ra-

---


\(^5\) See for example, Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 163. Sullivan has called this movement “the interracial movement that grew up around the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) and remained largely unchanged by the forces that gave rise to the New Deal-inspired SCHW.” Moreover, she argues that “[T]raditional southern liberalism was guided by the assumption that the ‘better class’ of white southerners would and should control the direction and pace of change in race relations in the South.”

\(^6\) “Commission on Interracial Cooperation,” NGE; Gilmore, p. 19.

\(^7\) “Commission on Interracial Cooperation,” NGE.
cial lines. Although African Americans and whites met and worked together during interracial meetings, these activists did not publicly protest segregation. Segregation was a topic that this group tried to avoid because of its divisiveness; merely discussing integration could derail activities.  

For almost twenty years the CIC brought together southern liberals (white and African American) and southern moderates who increasingly sought ways in which to improve the situation of African Americans in the South. CIC members believed their work to be relevant and the majority of southern whites expected the southern segregated way of life to extend far into the future. The CIC addressed several critical issues: ensuring African Americans consistently received equal treatment under the law, economic parity with whites, and improved educational opportunities.  

As the Great Depression extended into the 1930s, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal provided opportunities for new ways of resolving the nation’s economic woes. Southern liberals, in particular, perceived Roosevelt’s New Deal as the South’s ticket to the future, and several prominent southern liberals, such as Clark Foreman and Alexander, flocked to Washington, D.C. to join the Roosevelt administration. Foreman was hired by the United States Interior Department as a “special adviser on the economic status of Negroes” and, in 1934 Alexander co-chaired the Committee on Negroes in the Economic Reconstruction. One year later Alexander was hired as the “deputy administrator of the federal Resettlement Administration.” This agency worked on behalf of sharecroppers and tenant farmers “who had been displaced by the Agricultural Adjustment Act’s policy of curbing cotton production.”  

In 1937, the Bankhead-Jones Farm Ten-

---

8 Gilmore, p. 19.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 230-231.
ancy Act created the Farm Security Administration, which Alexander headed. Once distanced from the South and the stodgy CIC, Alexander began moving away from the “interracial cooperation model,” as data collected by federally-funded studies increasingly blamed the South’s economic ills “directly or indirectly” on segregation.

Back in the South, federal funds were being used to study economic and social issues. The CIC under noted sociologist Howard Odum, who became its president in 1937, shifted its focus from interracial meetings to research. The purpose of the change in tactics was so the CIC could determine the root causes of the economic disparities between the races so they could educate others on the results and elicit change – gradually moving toward integration. With Odum at its head, the CIC still refused to take any official position against segregation, while his southern liberal counterparts in Washington were using “the New Deal to force change.” Odum was the department head of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and was more absent than present at the CIC headquarters in Atlanta. With former CIC leaders in Washington becoming more radicalized in their thinking, their perception of the CIC’s mission became less relevant. Furthermore, with absentee leadership, the CIC’s focus became fragmented. Absent guidance from senior leadership, Jessie Daniel Ames became the defacto management of the CIC’s offices in Atlanta and eventually reactivated the CIC’s interracial meetings strategy. Ames was a successful organizer of women within the CIC and Women’s Division of the Methodist Church and also the founder of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. Influenced by her experiences in the Women’s Division of the Methodist Church, Ames believed that racial tensions could be alleviated by bringing together people of both races.

---

12 Gilmore, pp. 230-231.
13 Ibid., pp. 235, 227.
to discuss matters and work out resolutions. Therefore, by the late 1930s the CIC, under Ames, was reverting to its original strategy of interracial cooperation and included participation from state level councils, all of which focused on the goal of improving human relations between the races.  

1.3 Women's Division of the Methodist Church

As segregation became firmly entrenched in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women’s religious groups worked to make inroads in race relations and racial uplift. The Women’s Division of the Methodist Church was one such group that had a long legacy in race relations beginning with 1912, when the Women’s Missionary Society (WMS) helped to organize “the first Settlement House for Negroes,” called Bethlehem Center in Augusta, Georgia. Additionally, a significant shift occurred for WMS’s activities when it overtly selected improved race relations as one of its primary goals. The churchwomen were charged both with learning about the hardships African Americans endured under segregation and with devising practical

---


measures to improve these conditions. Women were to study various areas such as “public schools, churches, recreation facilities, jails and courts, housing and sanitation.”

At a 1920 meeting held in Memphis, Tennessee, African American women, who were leaders in their churches and communities, met with white churchwomen. As a result of that critical meeting, the WMS reinforced and rejuvenated its commitment to improved race relations and “social conditions.” One result was the creation of Christian Leadership Schools, which were designed by the WMS to bring together Methodist women of both races so that African American women could be trained as leaders in the Colored Methodist Episcopal women’s societies. These schools were set up as week-long experiences in which Methodist women of both races lived and studied together. Attendees were later contacted and the data collected from these surveys demonstrated that interracial contacts such as these experienced in these conferences allowed the women to communicate effectively and thoughtfully across racial lines to address local issues. For many, the conference was a spiritually changing experience.

Dorothy Tilly was one such southern churchwoman who became more involved with the WMS sometime shortly after 1910 and expanded her activism within it during the 1930s. In 1930, Tilly was sent by the WMS to teach a course at a Christian Leadership School held at this historically black Paine College in Augusta. There she met Thelma Stevens, the conference’s organizer, who asked Tilly to luncheon at the school cafeteria with her and the students. Tilly had never before eaten with African Americans, and although she hesitated for an instant, she did

---

19 Ibid., p. 231.
so only because she had never done anything like it before. In the segregated South, a white person dining with African Americans was considered a strict social taboo. Stevens, who was about twenty years Tilly’s junior, became the teacher that day to her older colleague. Stevens recognized that Tilly was ready for this experience, and she very calmly but firmly encouraged Tilly. Thanks to Stevens, Tilly, at age forty-seven, had her first meal in the company of African American women and, after this experience, Stevens noted that Tilly’s rapport with her African American students became “more collegial.” The experience changed Tilly inwardly as well, and she came to completely renounce segregation during this decade. Moreover, the manner in which Stevens guided Tilly and the environment in which this life-altering experience had occurred allowed Tilly to safely cross the racial boundary and overcome whatever fear she may have associated with interracial dining. Tilly was living proof that through love, education, trust, and faith, a person could overcome preconceived racist attitudes and break through entrenched racial barriers.

In the 1930s, Tilly involved herself in a variety of organizations that dealt with human rights issues. In this critical decade for Tilly, she immersed herself in activist work with other Methodist women in a variety of organizations. These women became increasingly aware of the dire situation many people – mainly African Americans – faced in the South. Moreover, these churchwomen understood their unique opportunity as white women to improve southern society. As part of their growth as activists, Tilly and other churchwomen like her became participants in the growing interracial movement, which afforded opportunities for African Americans and


21 Knotts, Fellowship of Love, p. 262; Riehm, p. 27.

22 Riehm, p. 28.
whites to meet as equals in social settings and take courses, eat, pray, and work out solutions to social problems together. It is due to these experiences that Tilly, and other southern liberals like her, eventually disavowed segregation as morally wrong.

1930 was a critical year for the WMS because it expanded its interracial work. The WMS’s Bureau on Christian Social Relations charged the churchwomen with “promoting more Christian race relations in their home communities by initiating an interdenominational women’s study of Negro life in their own community…. After conducting this study, the white women were to organize and conduct Bible study classes for black women.” The goal was for them to report back to their respective missionary societies what they had learned in their interracial weekly Bible meetings. By 1932, Jessie Daniel Ames, the head of the Women’s Department of the CIC, suggested that the African American and white women begin working together “from the start” and that way, better results would be achieved more rapidly. Testimony from those who had already been involved in local interracial meetings demonstrated that these experiences allowed for “the growth of community co-operation for better schools, better churches, better homes, and better lives for all people.”  

These interactions also led to increased understanding of the extreme hardships some African Americans faced under the Jim Crow system. When school systems in Alabama were studied by the WMS’s Bureau of Christian Social Relations as part of a larger effort focused on improving black schools, the churchwomen witnessed the disparities between the adequately funded white schools and the underfunded black schools. Additionally, deplorable sanitation conditions in the black schools and in many black homes reinforced the realization that segregation

---

was not only separate but grossly unequal, and this helped to extinguish any misconceptions white women had about the Jim Crow system.24

During the Depression, the Methodist women also turned their attention to the issues of rural southerners and the plight of tenant farmers, who “faced the most deprivation of adequate housing, sanitation, food, health care, and education.” Tilly was appointed by the WMS to represent it with the National Rural Administration and assist in creating “sister societies” in the rural South. By 1933, Methodist women included an update on the progress of race relations within the Commission on Rural Development, of which Tilly was secretary. This was a critical observation because it meant “that within the Bureau of Christian Social Relations, racial issues were being considered whenever and wherever they surfaced and would not automatically be shunted off to a specialty group.” Other connections across the racial divide were occurring as well, and white women’s missionary societies increasingly invited their African American counterparts to meet with them to engage in activities together, such as “World Day of Prayer.”25

These white churchwomen eventually branched out their activism to the political arena, and even tackled the white primary. Women were charged with examining the voting practices in their own local communities to see the extent of discrimination in the system, and also to make recommendations on remedying whatever shortcomings they discovered. This venture into the voting rights arena marked a critical departure for the Methodist women. This area was no longer considered “dangerous” as it had been viewed back in 1920, the first year in which women could vote in national elections. Now it was considered yet another opportunity for the women to explore as part of their work in human relations.26

---

24 Ibid., p. 237.
25 Ibid., p. 238.
26 Ibid., p. 239.
In another bold move, the women shone the investigative spotlight within their own homes and examined how they were paying and treating their African American domestic help. This study helped convince the WMS that across the South, improvements to the working conditions of domestic labor were necessary.  

Increasingly in the 1930s some white southern Methodist women became more involved in improving the lives of all southerners – both black and white. Their focus shifted early in the decade to concentrate on improving human relations in the South. These women believed the best way to achieve this goal was to open the lines of communication between churchwomen of both races through interracial experiences such as Christian Leadership Schools, Bible studies, and missionary society meetings. In these organized encounters, women of both races could converse intelligently about issues as leaders in their respective churches and as mothers and wives in their respective communities. In these meetings, attendees strove to better understand the issues and deliberately selected areas to tackle, such as schools, housing, employment conditions, and lynching, with the goal of making the South a place in which all humans, regardless of race, could thrive.

1.4 The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching

1930, the first year of the Great Depression, also witnessed a spike in lynching. In the early to mid-1930s, with heavy southern representation in New Deal agencies, the South became the benefactor of much-needed federal funding for studies and programs. Organizations such as the CIC shifted its strategy away from interracial work to that of research and educational programs. As a result of the increased lynching, certain CIC members, such as Arthur Raper and

\[
27 \text{ Ibid.}
\]
Jessie Daniel Ames, redirected their activism to focus on this issue. Raper, a sociologist who worked under Howard Odum at Chapel Hill, researched the lynchings that had occurred in the South, and in 1933 he published his conclusions in the well-received *The Tragedy of Lynching*. Ames, as the head of the Women’s Department of the CIC, and in conjunction with the Women’s Missionary Council (WMC) of the Methodist Church and the National Association of Colored Women, helped form an all-white female organization which she called the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL).

By the end of the 1930s the ASWPL had helped to reduce the incidence of lynching in the South, but Ames would not support a federal anti-lynching law. She believed that the ASWPL’s efforts were the surest way to eradicate lynching in the South, and furthermore that racial matters should be settled by the individual states and not through the intervention of the federal government. While Ames was the brains behind the ASWPL, a great deal of the field work was done by activist Dorothy Tilly. By the mid-1940s, Tilly would emerge as a leader and replace Ames as Director of Women’s Work for the CIC.

---


31 Knotts, “Methodist Women and Interracial Fairness,” p. 231.
1.5 The Great Depression and the New Deal

During the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal program implemented specific legislation intended to stimulate the faltering economy. Some of these initiatives assisted African Americans and this angered southern Democrats. During the 1930s the combination of New Deal programs, legislation, the labor movement, and the Left forged a charged atmosphere of hope and progress in the growing black protest movement that was unmatched in prior years. Additionally, New Deal programs elevated the status of African Americans to a national level.  

In the 1934 congressional elections, many black voters abandoned the Republican Party for the Democratic Party, a dramatic shift that did not go unnoticed by politicians. For the first time since Reconstruction, African American voters were being taken seriously by “urban liberals” and those “in the labor movement.” African Americans also began to demand more from New Deal programs, and Franklin Roosevelt responded. His Federal Council on Negro Affairs, known informally as the “Black Cabinet,” offered guidance to Roosevelt on matters affecting African Americans during the Depression and New Deal. Southern conservative Democrats became increasingly angered by Roosevelt’s attention to African Americans, and this put Roosevelt in a delicate situation as he attempted to woo African Americans as newfound supporters in the Democratic Party and keep his southern white constituents happy.

---


The Great Depression also brought more whites into economically dire straits, along with many blacks. During this time, the racial problem transformed into an economic problem under the larger umbrella of the Depression. While African Americans’ plight was of some concern to President Roosevelt, many of his New Deal programs fell far short of alleviating hard times for African Americans. For example, during Roosevelt’s first term, racial discrimination was widely permitted within New Deal agencies and Roosevelt “sanctioned regional wage differences that resulted in southern blacks under NRA codes being paid less” or being excluded.

In the face of the economic crisis, Roosevelt sacrificed reform on behalf of African Americans in order to get legislation passed by southern Democrats in hopes of benefitting the majority of Americans. This practice was most evident in 1934 and again in 1935 when Roosevelt refused to openly support a federal anti-lynching bill, because in doing so he would alienate southern Democrats in Congress and admitted so:

I did not choose the tools with which I must work… Had I been permitted to choose them I would have selected quite different ones. But I’ve got to get legislation passed by Congress to save America. The southerners by reason of the seniority rule in Congress are chairmen or occupy strategic places on most of the Senate and House committees. If I come out for the anti-lynching bill now, they will block every bill I ask Congress to pass to keep America from collapsing. I just can’t take that risk.

This byproduct of the political machinations increased the economic division between blacks and whites during the Depression, thus exacerbating the racial division.

Despite Roosevelt’s attempts to keep southern Democrats happy during his second term, his wooing of southern liberals caused the growing resentment and distrust of him by southern conservatives to reach a breaking point, evidenced in the dwindling support from southern conservative politicians for Roosevelt’s continued New Deal policies. While many New Deal pro-

---

35 Jackson, p. 6.
36 Leuchtenburg, p. 56. The NRA is the National Recovery Act.
37 Ibid., pp. 57-58 and Roosevelt as quoted by Leuchtenburg, p. 58.
grams were not ostensibly pro-civil rights for African Americans, those that undermined white supremacy aroused southern conservative opposition. When wage-and-hour legislation was proposed, Congressman Martin Dies of Texas balked because of the race issue and exclaimed indignanty, “you cannot prescribe the same wage for the black man as for the white man.”

By 1936 some southern Democrats, especially Harry Byrd and Carter Glass of Virginia, “had become caustic opponents of FDR and his programs.” Georgia’s Governor, Eugene Talmadge, also developed a great disdain for Roosevelt, accusing him of being a Bolshevik and denouncing programs such as the National Recovery Act (NRA), Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA). In 1936, Talmadge organized a meeting with the purpose of “blocking Mr. Roosevelt’s renomination.” Once elected, Roosevelt faced increased criticism from southern whites for actions such as his Supreme Court packing scheme and his support of sit-down strikes, “and his intervention in party affairs.” Despite “ferocious southern opposition,” Roosevelt’s Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) was passed in 1938, with the majority of votes against it coming from southerners. Nevertheless the Roosevelt administration made many concessions to the white South – such as excluding domestic workers from the FLSA and allowing the administration of federal relief to be carried out locally without federal oversight.

1.6 The Report on the Economic Conditions of the South

By 1938 Roosevelt, smarting from his inability to sway many southern senators to his ongoing New Deal ideas, sought ways in which he could regain lost political ground in the South. His mission was threefold: (1) to educate white southerners about the benefits that his

38 Ibid., pp. 121, 128.
39 Ibid., pp. 124-126.
New Deal had brought to the South in order to gain support for continued programs; (2) to further alleviate regional poverty; and (3) to replace southern conservatives in Congress with southern liberals.\textsuperscript{40} To meet this third goal, Roosevelt met with Clark Foreman in the Spring of 1938. Foreman, a Georgia native who had been mentored by Will W. Alexander at the CIC, was now director of the Public Works Administration’s (PWA’s) Power Division. Roosevelt pumped Foreman for suggestions on who to run against Senator Walter George in the Georgia primaries. Foreman could not come up with any names, but he mentioned a plan that Jerome Frank, legal counsel to the Power Division, had devised to create a “pamphlet calling the attention of the nation to the economic problems of the South.” Foreman argued that such a pamphlet “could be used in the southern primaries to demonstrate the benefits the New Deal had brought to the region.” Although Roosevelt liked the idea, he suggested that Foreman and his associates instead “offer the bare facts of the economic difficulties confronting the South” in a report so that, once provided the facts, southerners could figure out their solutions. Roosevelt envisioned this report might be the first of many. To that end, Roosevelt summoned Lowell Mellett, director of the National Emergency Council (NEC) to lead the effort.\textsuperscript{41}

Foreman and Mellett solicited input and assistance from other white southern New Dealers such as Clifford Durr and labor leader Lucy Randolph Mason, and together they compiled a draft of the requested report. The group also assembled an advisory board which would review the report’s draft, and they sought noted University of North Carolina (UNC) sociologist and southern liberal Howard Odum to chair this effort. When Odum declined, the group approached Frank Porter Graham, the president of UNC at Chapel Hill, who had largely been responsible for

\textsuperscript{40} Patricia Sullivan, \textit{Days of Hope}, p. 63; Linda Reed, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{41} Leuchtenburg, pp. 102-103.
turning that University into a “beacon of liberalism in the South.” Roosevelt called this group the Conference on Economic Conditions of the South (CECS), and Graham became its chair. In this capacity, Graham asked the group to read the draft and make recommendations; then he called the group together for a review of it. This group, now twenty-two members strong, represented a cross section of southern business, politics, labor, and newspaper professionals, and it included notables like First National Bank of Birmingham’s president John C. Persons, Governor Carl Bailey of Arkansas, and Barry Bingham, publisher of Louisville’s Courier-Journal. Also present at the review of the draft were Lyndon B. Johnson, a junior Congressman from Texas and a Roosevelt supporter, and John Sparkman, a soon-to-be second-term Congressman from Alabama, although neither was an official committee member.

Within a month, the conference members completed their revisions and editing. They then presented Roosevelt with the final report published by the National Emergency Council entitled, Report on Economic Conditions of the South (RECS), which contrasted the South disparagingly against other sections of the country. The CECS’s unfavorable report card, coupled with Roosevelt’s statement in early July that year, labeling the South as “the Nation’s No. 1 economic problem,” touched the nerves of many white southerners. They became defensive of their region and, resisting change from outsiders, resorted to blaming African Americans for the region’s ills. Roosevelt used the report against two conservative southern Democrats in Georgia, Eugene Talmadge and Walter George, in his visit there during the primary season in the fall of 1938.

42 Sullivan, Days of Hope, p. 64 and Leuchtenburg, p. 103.
43 Linda Reed, 4-5; and Sullivan, Days of Hope, pp. 64-65.
44 Sullivan, Days of Hope, pp. 64-65.
45 Linda Reed, p. 5.
46 Franklin D. Roosevelt as quoted in Linda Reed, p. 6; Ibid., p. 7.
47 Leuchtenburg, p. 94, pp. 95-97.
True to its intent, the RECS dealt with southern economic issues for the region as a whole. It also devoted an entire section to the topic of education, which would have been especially interesting to the CECS chair, Frank Graham, who was an educator and a lifelong proponent of public education.\footnote{National Emergency Council, \textit{Report on the Economic Conditions of the South}, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1938) \url{http://www.archive.org/details/reportoneconomic00nati}. Retrieved February 19, 2012; For more on Frank Graham see Warren Ashby, \textit{Frank Porter Graham: A Southern Liberal}, (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: J.F. Blair Publisher, 1980).} The report did not highlight the differences between white and African American schools in the South, but rather contrasted sharply the southern educational systems with others outside of the region. The findings were startling: New York State outspent Mississippi by five times on each student. The report also noted that southern teachers’ salaries were far lower than those earned by their northern counterparts. The average annual salary for a teacher in New York State was $2,361, while Arkansas paid an average annual salary of $465 to its teachers. Additionally, the collective endowments of all secondary educational institutions in the South fell short of the combined endowments of Harvard and Yale universities.\footnote{Leuchtenburg, pp. 107-108.} The conference concluded that “[T]he South must educate one-third of the Nation’s children with one-sixth of the Nation’s school revenues.”\footnote{National Emergency Council, \textit{Report on the Economic Conditions}, p. 26.}

The report did fault the nation and northern business, claiming both had exploited the South. It also relied extensively on the work of Odum and his “Chapel Hill regionalists,” and therefore “conspicuously failed to acknowledge racial antagonisms in the South,” because regionalism relied on the idea that all southerners shared the same problems that were “geographically based.”\footnote{Leuchtenburg, pp. 105-106.}

Although the RECS side-stepped the South’s obvious racial issues, only mentioning “Negroes” five times in the report, the conference’s liberal members wrote a report that tacitly un-
dermined the white South’s power and tradition of segregation. Furthermore, “the report did not separate economic data by race,” marking a distinction from previous patterns. While the RECS focused on the South’s economic problems and touched on education, its authors did not propose specific solutions, except for recommending that the South enlist and accept help from the federal government. The omission of a set of specific recommendations presented an opportunity for the coming together of a unique group of liberal southerners, both African American and white, who had already been focused on the South’s issues. At the same time that the CECS held their first meeting, another organization was already forming, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW). Not surprisingly, the two groups would share many members.

1.7 The Southern Conference for Human Welfare

Labor activist Joseph Gelders had been beaten brutally in 1937 during an outbreak of violent acts against southern labor organizers and communist sympathizers, specifically because of his testimony in the La Follette Hearings. Gelders met with Lucy Randolph Mason early in 1938 to recommend the formation of a regional group to oppose the anti-labor movement’s violent tactics. Mason introduced Gelders to Eleanor Roosevelt, who brokered a meeting for Gelders with her husband in June 1938. Franklin Roosevelt supported Gelders’ idea, but recom-

54 Senator Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin chaired the Subcommittee Investigating Violations of Free Speech and the Rights of Labor, which was part of the Committee on Education and Labor. This subcommittee was informally known as the “La Follette Hearings” and existed between 1936 and 1940 and its purpose was to investigate corporate instigated anti-union activity. For more information about the La Follette Hearings see, for example, Jerold S. Auerbach, Labor and Liberty: The La Follette Committee and the New Deal, (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966) and Patrick J. Maney, Young Bob: A Biography of Robert M. La Follette, Jr., (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2002).
mended that the group expand its outlook to encompass all of the issues that plagued the South, especially the issue of voting rights, and he pushed for a larger effort to end the poll tax. The group formed became the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW). The SCHW experience was, for many, the first time southern liberals had worked together and collaborated on such an important project that looked at the region as a whole. Moreover, the forming of the SCHW also signified a watershed in that it would use the findings of the RECS as a springboard to collectively set forth its goals for improving the South.  

The Roosevelts openly supported the SCHW. In fact, at the first convention of the SCHW, Franklin Roosevelt sent the following message to the attendees, acknowledging the promise inherent in the South, while simultaneously reminding the group that the South had benefited from federal help (via his New Deal programs). Nevertheless, Roosevelt alluded that their document, the RECS, had revealed to them, as Southerners, that there was much more work to be done:

The long struggle by liberal leaders of the South for human welfare in your region has been implemented on an unprecedented scale these past five and one-half years by Federal help. Yet we have recognized publicly this year that what has been done is only a beginning, and that the South’s unbalance is a major concern not merely of the South, but of the whole Nation. It is heartening, therefore, to see the strength of Southern leadership mustered to face these human problems…in a united front from Fort Raleigh to the Alamo.

If you steer a true course and keep everlastingly at it, the South will long be thankful for this day.

In his message Roosevelt characterized the South’s issues as human problems – not racial problems or specifically African American problems. Roosevelt described the South as a region

---

56 Franklin D. Roosevelt as quoted by Leuchtenburg, p. 115.
that needed help, and through the CECS and the SCHW Roosevelt succeeded in convening a committee, without officially appointing one, to address southern political and economic ills. Roosevelt’s support of the SCHW was prominent and significant. He ensured that it would be southerners addressing the concerns enumerated by the RECS and not outsiders. Moreover, it demonstrated that he envisioned his political solutions within the economic solutions to southern poverty, thereby implicitly acknowledging one southern liberal diagnosis of problems as residing with the South’s economy. Modernizing the South economically promised to make Southerners more like the rest of the (pro-New Deal) nation, and produce more mainstream (i.e., pro-New Deal) Congressmen, who Roosevelt desperately needed to support his New Deal programs.

Modernizing the South would take more than just economic reform; it went hand in hand with democracy. The fights to eliminate the poll tax (which occurred in Georgia in 1945) and the white primary were also significant markers of modernization.

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt’s support was also significant and influential. She attended the first conference of the SCHW, held in Birmingham, Alabama, the weekend after Thanksgiving 1938 and just three months after the RECS was published. Over one thousand people attended the inaugural meeting, and twenty percent of attendees were African Americans. Among those in attendance was Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal and several of his team, who were researching American racial issues through a project funded by the Carnegie Institute. Other notable liberals in attendance included Arthur Raper and Virginia Durr. At this meeting Frank Graham was elected the president of the SCHW, a position he initially declined but then later accepted “in response to the firestorm that followed the meeting.” White racists and anti-Communists opposed the SCHW and many sent “hate mail” to Graham over his involvement in

---

57 Gilmore, p. 270.
58 Egerton, p. 187.
the group. Graham held the position of SCHW president until 1940. Howard Odum was conspicuously absent from the initial meeting, perceiving the nascent SCHW to be a direct threat to the efforts and influence of the CIC, of which he had recently assumed the presidency.  

During this SCHW gathering, attendees significantly advanced the reform discourse by extending it from one of economics into more controversial, yet necessary, areas such as “civil liberties.” The delegates discussed and resolved to improve the varied problems that plagued the South such as poverty, education, poll tax, and farm tenancy. At this meeting members adopted a resolution against segregation, and they ignored Birmingham’s segregation codes until Birmingham’s Commissioner of Public Safety, Theophilus Eugene “Bull” Connor, ordered his officers to disrupt the meeting and enforce them. After the meeting, some attendees including Graham came under attack by white supremacists. The Left also criticized the SCHW for its refusal to tackle segregation except within the confines of the meeting.

At the end of the 1930s a significant contingent of trailblazing southern liberals, one of whom was Frank Graham, supported by Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, was leading the way toward segregation’s repudiation and advancing civil liberties, thus sowing the seeds of a reconceived attitude toward race relations in the South and in the White House.

59 Gilmore, pp. 269, 271; Julian M. Pleasants and Augustus M. Burns III, Frank Porter Graham and the 1950 Senate Race in North Carolina, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 126. According to Pleasants and Burns, during the war the momentum of the SCHW halted due to the “internal conflicts” involving World War II, communism, and “the vicissitudes of Soviet foreign policy.” Jonathan Gentry, “All That’s Not Fit to Print: Anticommunist and White Supremacist Campaign Literature in the 1950 North Carolina Democratic Primary,” The North Carolina Historical Review, Volume LXXXII, Number 1, (January 2005): 33-60, p. 36. Gentry argues that with war clouds escalating over Europe, Graham turned his attention to helping the war effort and in helping to reduce prejudice in the nation. He resigned from the SCHW presidency in 1940, although he remained as honorary president until 1948.


62 Gilmore, 270-271; Leuchtenburg, pp. 113-114; 116; Linda Reed, pp. 12, 17; Matthews, p. 172.
1.8 From Southern Liberalism to Modern Racial Liberalism

During the New Deal, the Roosevelt administration forged a new national liberalism, characterizing the exceptional American experience as the best in the world. The 1940s witnessed the continuing and accelerated shift in liberalism that had begun in the late 1930s. World War II would hasten the pace of change out of necessity, and a landmark study published in 1944 would define a new racial liberalism.

Prior to the late 1940s, many southern liberals – black and white – accepted the tenet of separate but equal, as long as the conditions were truly equal. The 1930s proved to be a decade of significant progress for black protest organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which during the 1930s had increased its membership so it had much more of a mass base presence across the South.

The NAACP argued cases in state courts and at the United States Supreme Court that chipped steadily away at the disparity between higher educational opportunities for blacks versus whites in southern states and pay inequity for African American teachers. These cases highlight

---

63 Singh, p. 86.
64 Many prominent white southern liberals such as Virginius Dabney, editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch and Jessie Daniel Ames would never move beyond the paradigm of separate but equal. See Patricia Sullivan, Days of Hope, p. 163. Sullivan has described “the interracial movement” as one “that grew up around the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) and remained largely unchanged by the forces that gave rise to the New Deal-inspired SCHW.” Moreover, she argues that “[T]raditional southern liberalism was guided by the assumption that the ‘better class’ of white southerners would and should control the direction and pace of change in race relations in the South.”; Dabney resigned from the Southern Regional Council immediately after it adopted its policy against segregation; Oral History Interview with Guy B. Johnson, July 22, 1990, Interview A-0345, Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Published by Documenting the American South [29 November 2011]. http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/A-0345/A-0345.html. For more of Dabney’s views on segregation see also, Oral History Interview with Harold Fleming, January 24, 1990, Interview A-0363. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Published by Documenting the American South [29 November 2011]. http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/A-0363/A-0363.html. For Ames’ view on segregation see Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, pp. 250,253.
65 For more about the NAACP, see Patricia Sullivan, Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement, (The New Press, 2010).
the fact that black protests in the 1930s were not always necessarily about integration, but about attaining equality under a system that failed to deliver on its promise of separate but equal.66

Two NAACP-fought cases in the late 1930s that tested the separate but equal system resulted in far more radical decisions than expected. In the 1936 case Pearson v. Murray, the Maryland Court of Appeals ruled against the University of Maryland, and since there were no other options in that State to provide a separate but equal option, it ordered the desegregation of the University of Maryland. Missouri ex rel Gaines, v. Canada, heard at the United States Supreme Court in 1938, also held that if there was only one state-owned law school, then it must admit both whites and blacks. While these decisions did not strike down Plessy v. Ferguson, they subverted segregation because they demonstrated that Plessy was not being practiced and exposed to the court inequalities of the separate but equal system.67

In 1938, Frank Graham’s leadership in southern liberalism was practically unmatched. While his liberal stance was unquestioned, the Pauli Murray case illuminated the limits of Graham’s southern liberalism. When Pauli Murray, an African American native North Carolinian, tested UNC at Chapel Hill by applying to graduate school to study sociology under Howard Odum and Guy Johnson, she was rejected solely on the basis of her race. Murray was inspired to action in part because of the Gaines Supreme Court decision and also because of Nazi atrocities in Europe. Murray took her case to the NAACP and simultaneously struck up a correspondence with Frank Graham to see if he would influence the University to reverse its decision and allow her admission. Graham was also concerned about Fascist Germany, but given the hate mail

Graham had received in the days following the SCHW meeting, he was also concerned that a strong and similarly hateful anti-African American sentiment was emerging in North Carolina. Graham advised Murray to be patient and move with caution. Graham was in a precarious position, simultaneously coming under attack by white supremacists and also racial liberals frustrated by the lack of progress being made in race relations. Graham warned Murray that if she pushed the issue legally, her actions might result in an unraveling of the progress which had already been made, or what he termed “an interracial throback [sic].” He also feared that “Integration would blow the lid off things.” Although Graham refused to intervene on Murray’s part, he admitted in a letter to her, which she sent to many black newspapers who published it, that “This much is certain… that the Constitution of North Carolina is inconsistent with the Constitution of the United States and should be changed to meet the ideals set forth by the first citizens of our country.” While Graham’s southern liberalism prevented him from making radical moves, his words belied a far more radical personal belief in the need for racial equality in education.  

By the early 1940s southern liberalism floundered as African Americans and the Left increasingly demanded an end to segregation. These members of “an anti-Fascist Left” pushed the South away from the inertia “of interracial cooperation to more radical political action in the late 1930s.” Interracial cooperation was failing due to the disturbing revelation that white supremacy had the ability for “relentless regeneration.” The CIC, lacking clear direction from absentee leadership and following defacto management, was an increasingly splintered organization that was languishing with membership rolls declining. Additionally, many state-level councils lacked funds and overall interest, especially from their African American members, to continue. In 1942, a frustrated southern liberal black activist leadership group, consisting of many CIC leaders...

---

69 Ibid., pp. 243-246.
70 Egerton, pp. 302-303.
members met in Durham, North Carolina and put forth their demands for improvements for African Americans in a document entitled “The Durham Statement.” In this document, black leaders clearly stated that they were opposed to segregation itself. White leaders of the CIC reacted to this document by holding their own meeting in Atlanta. They responded to the Durham conference by maintaining their opposition to racial inequities but with an unwillingness to challenge segregation. In June 1943, the two groups met in Richmond, Virginia, and the result was the death of the outmoded CIC and the birth of the Southern Regional Council (SRC), which was chartered in 1944. Jessie Daniel Ames was ultimately ousted and Dorothy Tilly then replaced her as the Director of Women’s Work for the SRC. The SRC’s mission would be similar to the strategy adopted by the CIC in the 1930s under Alexander and Odum - to attain racial equality through research and educational programs. Despite all of the energy expended in transforming the CIC into the SRC, the fundamental policy about segregation remained the same and the SRC did not forthrightly challenge segregation until 1951.71

1944 was also the year in which Gunnar Myrdal published his sweeping critique of the racial division in America, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy. In it, he defined a new racial liberalism, one characterized by both an integrated society and racial equality. In other words, Myrdal concluded that in order for America to solve its racial dilemma, it must eliminate segregation and immediately confer full rights to African Americans. Funded by the Carnegie Institution, Myrdal, a Swedish social scientist, was specifically selected to lead this study since, as a foreigner, he would be free of the attitudes of race division that had historically plagued race relations in the United States. The task took several years of research

and included an interracial group of northerners and southern liberals. While Myrdal accepted advice from black and white leaders such as Du Bois and Odum, he purposely did not use this top leadership for his research. Rather, he selected those from its second tier, such as Ira De A. Reid or Guy B. Johnson, so that his work would not be unduly influenced by either the more radical black activist approach or by southern liberalism’s cautious and non-confrontational approach to the racial issues. Myrdal also utilized the research of two of Odum’s students, Arthur Raper and Thomas Woorfer. Myrdal’s remedy of immediate absorption of African Americans into mainstream America sounded superficially like a reasonable and logical solution. The consequence of following this tactic meant that African Americans would have to assimilate and therefore abandon their cultural differences in order to do so quickly. Myrdal’s approach for becoming American implicitly meant becoming white.72

Southern newspaper editors largely ignored *An American Dilemma* when it was first published in 1944. Several leaders in southern liberal circles dismissed it. Howard Odum wrote a review in *Social Forces* criticizing Myrdal’s inability to articulate “more concrete recommendations” in solving the American dilemma. Rupert Vance, in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, acknowledged Myrdal’s assertion that African Americans desired integration, but objected to Myrdal’s suggestion that the issues be resolved “by political means.”73 These attitudes demonstrate that some leaders within southern liberal ranks not only wanted to continue to control the pace of change with respect to race relations, but they also did not want the federal government involved in making those changes.

72 Egerton, p. 274; Jackson, p. 134; Singh, p. 91; pp. 32-33; pp. 38-40
In the 1940s, the use of education to combat prejudice had been espoused by various “social scientists and social reformers” whose efforts became known collectively as the Intergroup Relations Movement. Spearheaded by American Jewish organizations to fight prejudice in America against the backdrop of the growing racial hatred under the Nazi German fascist regime, this movement also included a wide range of other religious organizations and therefore became an ecumenical movement.  

The Intergroup Relations Movement was more commonly known as a “community relations or human relations” movement, and it espoused the use of mass media (mainly radio) “to influence individual’s attitudes and behavior” toward people of different races, ethnic backgrounds, and religions. The organizations’ members also believed that youth education was a critical method in eradicating prejudice, because exposing children to various aspects of differing cultures would lead to tolerance and acceptance before they had a chance to learn hatred.

When Myrdal published his study of American prejudice in 1944, it was groundbreaking because it described prejudice and discrimination as moral and psychological problems – not issues that were rooted in economics. Myrdal therefore, “had a significant profound influence on the way that intergroup relations workers and social scientists understood race and racism in the postwar period.” Furthermore, Myrdal’s belief that prejudice and racism could be eliminated through education supported the Intergroup Relations Movement’s efforts.

Thus by the mid-1940s, three strategies had been identified as ways in which the racial issues in the South might be resolved. The traditional southern liberal stance was to research issues and then provide education about those issues. For example, some southern liberals sought

---

75 Ibid., p. 1; p. 43.
76 Ibid., p.31; p. 63.
economic remedies to bring about economic parity among the races. Once achieved, they thought this would then evolve naturally into the voluntary dissolution of segregation. Another approach adopted by the Women’s Division of the Methodist Church and advanced by women activists in the Methodist Church and the CIC involved bringing the two races together in interracial meetings to discuss issues and work out solutions. This tactic would allow for understanding between the races, acceptance of the commonalities between them as human beings, and respect for differences. The third approach, which Myrdal proposed in *An American Dilemma*, identified America’s racial problem as a moral issue. To fix the problem, he recommended a short cut to ending segregation – integrate immediately with use of political means to help African Americans achieve full rights as citizens and educate whites to assist them in accepting the forced change. This liberal universalist message ultimately, with the assistance of the President’s Commission on Civil Rights in 1947 which advanced it, would become the new national liberalism.

1.9 *World War II, the FEPC, and the Bureau of Intelligence*

World War II essentially ended the Depression and collided with the growing assertiveness of the African American Civil Rights Movement, which had gained support and momentum during the 1930s and continued this trajectory into the 1940s. The United States’ entry into the war accelerated the nation’s immediate need to become “the arsenal of democracy,” highlighted its emergence as a global leader and its role as a symbol of equality, and brought the racial division within the United States to the forefront as it became a matter of “national security, international relations, and global justice.”\(^{77}\)

\(^{77}\) Singh, p. 103.
In the United States millions of unemployed Americans found jobs in the growing defense industry. This increase in employment gave rise to other issues such as “ghettoization” in northern cities, as blacks migrated north to find employment opportunities. When given a chance at employment in the nascent defense industry, African Americans found themselves relegated to the dirtiest, most menial, and lowest paying jobs. Because of this blatant discrimination, African American leaders threatened mass protests. Additionally, the crowding of these urban spaces would lead to race riots erupting in cities across the nation. In response to both crises, the federal government would ultimately be forced to act.

President Roosevelt birthed the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) in 1941 via executive order, after labor leader A. Philip Randolph’s all-black March on Washington Movement threatened to precipitate a massive public protest against discriminatory hiring practices in the defense industry. These protests would undermine the war effort and significantly damage the United States’ reputation internationally. The FEPC, which was designed to investigate discrimination in the defense industry, was itself a breakthrough because it was the first federal agency since Reconstruction appointed to address minorities’ issues. Moreover, the protestors who forced Roosevelt to create the FEPC reflected the growing assertiveness and confidence demonstrated by activist African Americans that had started in the 1930s.

Despite the FEPC, discrimination in the defense industry continued and in 1942 whites far outnumbered minorities by a margin of ninety-seven percent to three percent in these jobs. Racial tensions continued to mount in urban areas in which minorities and whites vied for em-

---

78 Ibid., p. 107.
80 Singh, pp. 91,104.
ployment, housing, and recreation in the same constricted areas. In 1942 episodes of racial conflict erupted in cities such as Beaumont, Texas and Detroit, Michigan. These disturbing events prompted Edwin R. Embree, president of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, to appeal to President Roosevelt and press him “to create a committee of race relations experts to advise him on government action.” While this request was not fulfilled, throughout that year the Bureau of Intelligence conducted a study to determine the attitudes of the American people and how they “sized up their major problems during their first year at war.” This report was entitled, “Report from the Nation December 7, 1942.”

The idea for such a report originated with the government’s attempt to understand and react to the “race tension” that was clearly “growing” within certain areas of the country. Philleo Nash of the Bureau of Intelligence (BOI), Office of Facts and Figures, recalled later that the government was already very concerned with the escalating “race tension.” In 1942 Nash had conducted an in-depth study of Detroit’s Sojourner Truth housing project riot, concluding that the race tension had been “localized.” More frustrating to Nash and his colleagues was that within the White House there was an accepted provincial theory about race riots that held they were events that “couldn't be controlled. They were a thing like tornadoes, you might say, ‘hu-

---

82 Singh, p. 106.
85 Office of War Information Bureau of Intelligence, “Report from the Nation December 7, 1942, Nash Papers.
87 For more information about this organization, see “Records of the Office of Government Reports,” National Archives, http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/044.html#44.5.7 [February 20, 2012]. This bureau had been established via Executive Order 8892 by Roosevelt in October 1941 within the Office of Facts and Figures under the Office for Emergency Management, which was part of the Office for Emergency Management. In June 1942, the bureau became part of the Office of War Information and then was eventually discontinued in March, 1943.
man hurricanes;’ unpredictable; unregulatable [sic]; and all you could do was endure it.” Nash, an anthropologist who had studied the Klamath Indians for his doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago, likened this flawed and limited thinking to that which “made it possible to have the Indian wars.” More important, as a conscientious social scientist, Nash along with his colleagues would not accept that there was simply nothing to be done about this problem. Therefore, they were determined to get attitudes and opinions on various topics from a cross section of Americans, and they amassed a great deal of information into this one study. Nash recalled their goal was to “pinpoint, if at all possible, the tension centers.” In other words, the researchers believed that they could get a better answer to the question of what was causing the race tension, and they would no longer be satisfied with the generic, vague, dismissive and pat answer that they had been receiving, which was “‘Some Negroes are pretty frustrated.’”

In this report, BOI offered “a selection of significant opinions” but realized that “[T]he story they tell is by no means complete. Yet taken together, they reveal a pattern of public thought.”

The report was particularly concerned with attitudes about African Americans, and also attitudes held by African Americans concerning their role in assisting the war effort. Regarding the latter, the report revealed that African Americans

as a group…are patriotic citizens and devoted to democratic ideals but that ‘resentment has led a substantial minority among them to feel that the war is exclusively the concern of whites and that their own efforts must be devoted to security opportunity and equality for their own people’ hence the “Double-V campaign.”

---

90 Ibid., p. 8.
When it came to the question of discrimination of African Americans, the report concluded:

There were sharp differences in opinions about Negroes between whites living in the South and whites living in the Northeast and West. Northerners and westerners were more prone than southerners to acknowledge that Negroes are as patriotic as whites, that they make equally good soldiers, and that they are entitled to wage equality with whites for equal work. Southerners were more prone than northerners and westerners to believe that Negroes are generally satisfied with existing conditions and that they are getting all the opportunities they deserve.\footnote{Ibid., p. 9.}

While this statement may not be surprising, given the South’s entrenched Jim Crow tradition, what was more troubling to the BOI was that attitudes such as this and those held by the “substantial minority” of African Americans prevented the American people from being “fully integrated” and “fully mobilized for civilian participation in” the war effort.\footnote{Ibid.}

Because of the numerous inputs and analyses that comprised this study, Nash believed it was “the first comprehensive study that had ever been made…of race tension in a quantifiable form.”\footnote{Oral History, Nash, June 24, 1966, p. 43.}

We were preparing a weekly intelligence report on information problems, and it was agreed in the Bureau that one of these weekly issues would be devoted to a complete analysis of the picture of race tension. Before that weekly report we threw all the forces of the Bureau of Intelligence into operation. Rensis Likert, and his surveys in depth, now at the University of Michigan; Wilson and the Opinion Survey; we were doing the most complete opinion survey in the United States in existence at this time, because we went into rural areas; we had a better sample; we got better results. The media analysis divisions were called upon to analyze the content of the press, the radio -- TV, of course, didn't exist -- of magazines. And our own Groups and Organization Section made an analysis of the attitudes of group leaders and members in organization positions with respect to Negro participation in the war. The participation in the war, and the tension resulting from it or from its absence, were the subjects of inquiry.\footnote{Ibid.}
Nash’s work resulted in a breakthrough because, for the first time, a thorough analysis had been completed and the report’s summary focused in on the issues based on data and not on opinion or hyperbole. With this information, Nash believed he had the tools to act.

Despite the amount of effort expended to collect this data, Nash and his researchers were thwarted by his superiors when he and his colleagues attempted to act on the valuable information. Although the study revealed a potentially very explosive situation, Nash recalled that “[N]obody wanted to hear about it,” and those that did push the subject were accused of being “just agitational [sic].” At the time, Congress was rather conservative and, according to Nash, at the federal level race relations in the early 1940s was deemed a “no-man’s land” - a political hot potato not to be tackled by the federal government. The states were to handle anything to do with African Americans and race relations. If a federal agency got involved, it did so at great risk of losing Congressional funding. Undaunted, and understanding the urgency of the situation, Nash persisted and continued his search for support in acting on the BOI report findings. In the spring of 1943 his tenacity paid off, because he found someone within the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD) who would listen to him – Jonathan Daniels. Former editor of Raleigh, North Carolina’s News and Observer, Daniels was a southern moderate who counted Frank Graham among his friends. He had been recently transferred from the OCD to the White House and was serving as an administrative assistant to Franklin Roosevelt. Unbeknownst to Nash, Daniels had just created the Office of War Information (OWI) department, which would replace Nash’s home

94 Ibid.
95 Ibid., pp.43-44.
department, the Office of Facts and Figures. By the summer of 1943, Nash’s collaboration with Daniels, a White House insider, made the work on the BOI report’s data possible. The surveillance network Nash and others had established included a cadre of newspaper reporters who communicated directly with the OWI within the White House. The timing of their collaboration was serendipitous, because by May 1943 race tensions flared and erupted into riots in Los Angeles. Washington, D.C. also witnessed rising racial tension. With the accurate forecasts provided by Nash’s efforts, the tension was able to be extinguished before it erupted. 97

The attitudes reflected in the BOI’s report foreshadowed an even larger outbreak of violence. Later in 1943 the volatile concoction of whites and African Americans living, working, and recreating in the same areas due to war industry expansion exploded into over 240 “racial disturbances” that occurred while these groups were “staking out their territory in contested public spaces.” 98 The most infamous and costly of these occurred in Detroit in June, 1943 and threatened Roosevelt’s “arsenal of democracy,” resulting in “one of the worst riots in twentieth-century America.” 99

When these race riots erupted, “numerous proposals for a national committee on race relations were put forward” from southern liberal Howard Odum, and New Deal liberals Saul K. Padover, Harold L. Ickes, and John Collier. 100 Odum had written Race and Rumors of Race, and by the early 1940s there were rumors circulating about a race war and that African Americans

---

99 Sugrue, p. 29.
were, amongst other things, “stockpiling” arms.\textsuperscript{101} Charles Johnson, who headed Fisk University’s Institute of Race Relations, scrutinized any “racial conflict and attitudes on a monthly basis throughout the 1940s.”\textsuperscript{102} David K. Niles, another assistant to Roosevelt, wrote an “elaborate memorandum” in which he recommended “the formation of a national citizens’ committee to work in conjunction with local committees to develop programs to combat racial tensions.”\textsuperscript{103} Roosevelt, whose New Deal and FEPC had already angered many southern Democrats, was unwilling to further alienate them during the war. Moreover, Nash argued that the FEPC was already considered by many to be a weak committee, and he reasoned “what was the point of having \textbf{two} weak committees or commissions to deal with different aspects of the same problem?” Therefore, Roosevelt rejected Niles’ idea for this type of committee.\textsuperscript{104} The fact that no one wanted another formal committee left open the option for an informal one, and here the collaboration between Nash and Daniels would bear fruit. As Nash observed, it was the Detroit race riot that proved ultimately that Nash, Daniels, and the OWI’s work could be utilized in identifying areas of racial tension and, more important, was used to prevent such happenings again.\textsuperscript{105}

\subsection*{1.10 The Maypole Committee}

During the crisis of the 1943 Detroit riot, all government intelligence agencies reported to the OWI and to Daniels. These agencies wrote intelligence reports for Daniels to review and act

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{102} Singh, p. 105. Charles S. Johnson’s papers are located at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.
\end{thebibliography}
upon. By contrast, in his OWI department, Nash was receiving information from the news wires almost real time. Nash, in turn, would telephone Daniels to provide him with information regarding breaking developments - much faster than any intelligence source could provide. As it turned out, in most cases the information being sent by the news reporters was just as accurate as the intelligence reports that trailed behind them. Being a newspaper man, Daniels preferred the fast pace of the journalists’ approach and intrinsically trusted this method over the more tedious one of report writing utilized by the intelligence sources. As a result, Daniels and Nash had a reliable cadre of news reporters providing them late breaking information, and “for the first time” there was “a responsible agency in the White House: an information-gathering service, the Office of War Information, and a place to go for action.”

At this point, Daniels and Nash discussed what their next steps would be, and Nash suggested that they form a committee. Daniels, who did not care for committees, disagreed with forming an official committee but asked Nash to consolidate a list of appropriate agencies Nash would recommend if a committee were to be formed. Nash complied and Daniels then instructed Nash to write a letter to all of the agencies Nash had listed, instructing them to designate someone to report directly to Daniels. This way, every agency that was involved with the race riot was to designate a representative whose responsibility was to keep Daniels and Nash informed. Daniels told Nash that this committee was never to meet because they had no time to waste in meetings; it would be, rather, a “maypole committee.”

Daniels took the idea to Roosevelt, who approved it. Daniels instructed Nash to do whatever he needed to make it work, warning him that if anything went wrong, OWI would

---

107 Ibid., p. 49. The maypole committee was also referred to as the “Daniels Nash” project. See Clyde W. Hart to Miss Katherine C. Blackburn, May 1, 1944, Box 27, Folder “Race Tension: Daniels-Nash Project,” Nash Papers.
be blamed, and if everything worked out, no one would know anything about it. From that point forward, there were no further race riots during the war.\textsuperscript{108}

The letter Nash wrote to members of the “maypole committee” was signed by Daniels. It included a proposal for “a dozen or more federal agencies that were concerned with the human needs in short supply in the war production centers: housing, health, recreation, education, transportation, and many others.” Nash’s goal was to be ever vigilant in looking for signs of racial violence, identifying the root causes, and removing them where possible. Nevertheless, if their committee could not stop racial violence during the war, there would be no hesitation in using federal troops to limit loss of lives and damage to the war effort.\textsuperscript{109}

Daniels and Nash devised a “two-fold program” as part of their efforts. The first part was to “insure the control of violence, if necessary, through the use of federal troops by Presidential Order.”\textsuperscript{110} Nash ordered that a nationwide network be formed consisting of “the Director of Domestic Counter-Intelligence, Army Service Forces,” state governors, “mayors of large cities,” and “appropriate military authorities” that would be notified in the event federal troops were needed.\textsuperscript{111} These organizations were to select a representative whose responsibility was to monitor race tension that might impede the war effort and report these situations immediately to Jonathan Daniels.\textsuperscript{112} Simultaneously, Nash utilized “standard intelligence sources,” “domestic news sources of OWI and the field offices of nearly every Government agency” to compile “significant daily” and “sometimes hourly information on the frequency of interracial violence.”\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{108} Oral history, Nash, June 24, 1966, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{110} Nash, “TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WHITE HOUSE LOYALTY BOARD” n.d., p. 28. Nash Papers, Box 188, Folder, “Lt Gov – Misc”.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Nash, “Science, Politics, and Human Values: A Memoir,” p. 192.
\textsuperscript{113} Nash “TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WHITE HOUSE LOYALTY BOARD”
Among those sources on whom Nash relied heavily was the African American press and their weekly publications. Nash’s outreach to the African American press is especially interesting since members were not permitted access to military bases and, during the war the black press was “pressured … to tone down its charge that the United States military was fighting a phony war against racism.”

Ted Poston, a ground-breaking African American journalist, proved to be an invaluable and well-connected resource and colleague to Nash and Daniels as he “could always think of someone who would know or who could find out what really happened in one of these incidents. Sometimes it was a black newsman or publisher, sometimes a black community leader, often a clergyman.” In 1936 Poston began writing freelance articles for the New York Post and in time, the newspaper hired him. During the war, he oversaw the “Negro News Desk” and then returned to the New York Post after the war.

Poston and Nash often worked together following up on leads pointing to potentially explosive situations in the defense industry. Examples of those problems they investigated and resolved included: “discrimination in assigning parking spaces; racially separate and unequal toilets; pay differentials; discrimination in hiring; promotions and leave….” While taken individually, these issues may seem small and perhaps insignificant but in actuality the collaboration between Nash, Poston, and Daniels proved successful. According to Daniels, the threesome “really made a sort of a White House team to contact with the military, the FBI, and Manpower to

114 Singh, p.106.
try to work out and prevent any kind of racial things in order to keep them from distracting the war effort.”  

He further explained:

we tried to work these things out in various ways before they blew up. It was a very -- well, I would say, a very undercover operation, not in any sense of secrecy, but we just didn't want to have high visibility for purposes of attracting the lightning. But I think we did a very useful job in minimizing problems of race which might have impeded the war effort.  

The second part of Nash’s and Daniel’s two-fold program dealt with obtaining “long-range information” which illuminated “unresolved problems” that Nash and Daniels “deemed indicative of increasing racial tension.” On a regular basis, Nash would meet with Daniels to review this information, then call upon agencies and local governments, which was necessary to defuse the situation at the local level.

While not a traditional committee, the “maypole” committee was yet another example in which Roosevelt demonstrated his pragmatism in dealing with racial issues. He only agreed to this committee as long as the primary goal was to diminish anti-war sentiment, prevent race riots, and above all keep the war effort unimpeded. Roosevelt’s purpose was to win the war and that goal eclipsed all others. A proposal for a committee whose mission was to anticipate, identify, and squash racial tensions that, left unchecked, would undermine the war effort was acceptable and approved. Thus a war that was rooted in anti-racism forced the United States to confront and to some extent deal with its own racist policies and practices in federal employment. This committee’s work proved successful, for after 1943 there were no further race riots during the war.

---

119 Ibid.
120 Nash “TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WHITE HOUSE LOYALTY BOARD.”
121 Oral history, Nash, June 24, 1966, p. 49.
After Roosevelt’s death, Daniels would not remain with the Truman administration for long. Niles and Nash would continue to serve under Truman, and they would prove especially important in the transition of attitudes about race relations from the perspective of the Oval Office during the Truman Administration. 122

1.11 Transitioning between the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations

In late 1944, Philleo Nash became a consultant for the American Council on Race Relations (ACRR). This organization was founded at a dinner hosted by Eleanor Roosevelt, and its members included Will W. Alexander, Marshall Field, and Edwin R. Embree. Although it was hoped that a private organization such as this one would be helpful in dealing with racial tensions in the post-war period, Nash predicted early on that it would not be successful in the long run. 123 Although Nash was pessimistic about this particular organization, he supported fully the notion of a committee to deal with post-war racial tension. Moreover, he felt it imperative “to get an early start” because his research indicated that the country would face racial violence in the wake of World War II. Nash perceived and predicted the post-war race tension issue as a “large national problem” 124 and not just a southern problem. Nash’s opinion mirrored that of Gunnar Myrdal, whose study declared that America’s race problem was a national one.

The existence of the ACRR itself is significant because, although Roosevelt was absent from the organizing dinner, it occurred at his dining table, was organized by his wife Eleanor, and was, as Nash argued, therefore “informally blessed by the White House.” 125 As with the

125 Ibid., p. 191.
SCHW in 1938, Roosevelt consistently avoided overtly entangling the federal government in controversial racial matters; yet he silently encouraged private citizens to tackle the racial issue—one the federal government dared not touch because of political repercussions. Roosevelt’s “informal blessing” of this private committee was echoed in his 1944 State of the Union Address in which he “proclaimed a ‘second Bill of Rights,’ promising to revive the New Deal and energize postwar liberalism.” These included “[T]he rights to a job, to decent housing, to adequate medical care, and to a good education” that Roosevelt stated should be inherent “regardless of station, race or creed.” His statements were quite aggressive and a “bold departure” for Roosevelt “at the start of a presidential year.”^126 Likewise, Roosevelt’s support of the ACRR suggests that the post-war era would provide him, for the first time, the opportunity to address the problem of domestic race relations completely separate from the context of a depression or war. Additionally, two of the committee’s founders were northerners so, unlike the earlier CECS or SCHW, this committee’s participants would not be limited to southerners. The creation of this committee, with Roosevelt’s silent support, was a proactive rather than a reactive mode for Roosevelt as the nation prepared to move into a post-war readjustment period.

When Daniels summoned Nash back to the White House in January 1945, Nash had already formed the belief “that only the Federal Government could deal with post-war tensions.” He therefore set about the task of preparing the White House for this aspect of the post-war period.127 Under Niles, Nash had already identified three areas for “the possibilities of Federal action,” and asked Niles to see where Roosevelt stood on the following topics: “the FEPC; Veterans, and the post-war Army.”^128 Looking toward the post-war era and their role in dealing with

ongoing “race tension,” Nash proposed that Niles speak with the President because “[I]f you can get instructions to go to work on strengthening FEPC; seeing that Negro veteran problems are properly looked after in the new Veteran’s Administration through the appointment of a Negro at the policy level; and on reducing segregation in the post-war armed forces, the tension job will be much easier.”

Nash perceived his and Niles’ roles in race relations continuing beyond the war and, even before the war ended, he was positioning the White House to take a more proactive rather than reactive role. In 1941 Roosevelt had created the FEPC primarily because of the African American-led March on Washington Movement. After the 1943 race riots, he allowed the “maypole” committee to form, but its job was to squelch further race riots - not to necessarily improve the lives of minorities. As the war’s end approached, Nash, with his several years of researching and analyzing racial tension and attitudes about minorities, and especially African Americans, understood better than anyone else in the Roosevelt White House the need for a more proactive approach to solving racial tension in the United States. Roosevelt died in 1945 before the war ended, and Harry S. Truman became the thirty-third president of the United States.

Truman was a native of Missouri, a state created in the turmoil that ultimately led to the Civil War. Truman’s heritage was southern - something his mother, who was still living at the time he became president, never forgot. Although Truman did not believe in the social equality of African Americans and whites, he felt strongly that every man ought to have the right to earn a living and enjoy a life free from violence. Truman had clarified his opinions about this issue almost five years earlier, on August 5, 1940 when he addressed the National Colored Democratic Convention in Chicago:

129 Ibid.
I wish to make it clear that I am not appealing for the social equality of the Negro. The Negro himself knows better than that, and the highest types of Negro leaders say quite frankly they prefer the society of their own people. Negroes want justice, not social relations.  

When Truman succeeded Roosevelt, many southerners, especially those in Congress, expected that his policies would respect the continuing tradition of segregation. Even before Roosevelt's death his race advisors, Nash and Niles, were preparing for an inevitable occurrence of post-war racial violence. When this violence erupted in the first year of the post-war period, it provided the opportunity for the Truman White House to foster a new, historic approach to race relations.

1.12 *Words, Missiles, and Blows: Post-War Racial Violence*

Roosevelt’s race relations advisor, Jonathan Daniels, a white southern moderate, believed like other southern moderates that the domestic race riots during the war years were “primarily a problem of black protest”\(^{132}\) and that the response of the federal government should be only to appease blacks to the smallest degree possible, or as Daniels put it, “throw a little meat to the lions.”\(^{133}\) In contrast, Nash believed adamantly that there would be a need for a federal-level committee during the readjustment period following World War II. He correctly predicted racial violence even before the troops began returning home. He recalled his rationale for his position in the following:

In 1919 – one of the first post-war years after the first World War – our country had been plagued by a series of violent race riots. I felt there was every reason to expect the same immediately after the second World War…. After World War I and up to 1943 in WWII, most riots occurred in the summer, especially in August, and most frequently in places associated with crowds. The crowding, the heat, and the competition

---


\(^{132}\) Sullivan, *Days of Hope*, p. 162.

\(^{133}\) Daniels, as quoted by Sullivan, *Days of Hope*, p. 162.
for space seemed to have bad chemistry. The 1919 riots were also associated with returning servicemen.\textsuperscript{134}

Nash and Daniels, during their collaboration in the OWI, had defined different categories to describe the intensity of race tension episodes and riots. The lowest on the scale was “words,” the next degree of intensity was “words and blows,” and the third and most dangerous was “words, blows, and missiles.”\textsuperscript{135} Toward the end of the war, Daniels became Roosevelt’s press secretary, whereupon Niles replaced Daniels, and thereafter Nash worked for Niles.\textsuperscript{136} This personnel change was critical in the shaping of race relations from the White House in the post-war years, because up until this time Daniels, the white southern moderate, had played the role of Roosevelt’s racial advisor but during the war the place for southern moderates narrowed. Niles and Nash were both northerners with far more liberal racial attitudes that would greatly influence their work, and they would continue in this capacity as they transitioned from the Roosevelt to the Truman administrations.

Once the war ended, the OWI was dissolved “and its functions were transferred to the” State Department.\textsuperscript{137} Nash continued in his role and prepared for what he called “the second critical phase of the program for the control of racial violence” that he and Daniels had created in 1943.\textsuperscript{138} Trying to be as proactive as possible and with the War Powers Act due to expire, Nash earnestly began to work with Niles “on a program which was designed primarily to end reliance on the President’s War Powers as the final basis for action, and secondly, to develop an affirma-

\textsuperscript{134} Nash, “Science, Politics, and Human Values: A Memoir,” p. 192.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p. 193.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Nash, “TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WHITE HOUSE LOYALTY BOARD,” p. 29.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
tive program of minority group advancement and participation in national life, which would ease the anticipated post-war tension.”¹³⁹ According to Nash,

[T]his was the beginning of the Civil Rights Program, which President Truman supported from the beginning, and which led eventually to the President’s Civil Rights Committee, the Fair Employment Board of the Civil Service Commission, the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, and the Committee on Government Contract Compliance.¹⁴⁰

Nash’s memos to David Niles at this time described the rising unemployment in the defense industry and warned that “decreasing employment and return of troops raise the same danger signals which preceded the riots of 1919.” In this critical juncture Nash held the federal government responsible for mitigating the impending problem when he wrote that the government should “be ready to act.”¹⁴¹

When World War II ended, many African American veterans returned to the South after having served with honor in the Armed Forces and having fought for the Double Victory – the one abroad, and the one against discrimination and for full citizenship back at home. In return for their sacrifices, they expected life in America to be better than when they left it, and they were willing to fight for it, if necessary. Even before the outbreak of World War II, the rise in African American militancy was evidenced in organizations such as the National Negro Congress, the Council on African Affairs, and the Congress for Racial Equality. This rising militancy was simultaneously forcing the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which had more of a mass base at this time, “in more radical directions.”¹⁴² During the 1940s, the NAACP experienced a nine-fold increase in membership, which meant that the organization

¹⁴¹ Nash, “MEMORANDUM FOR DAVID NILES,” n.d.
¹⁴² Singh, pp. 102-103.
had more money to fund court cases. The post-war period witnessed a continuance of this “time of rising resentment of black assertiveness.”

African American veterans viewed the post-war period as ripe for making progress, and they expected their situation in the Jim Crow South to be improved when they returned as victorious veterans of a war against racism and fascism.

As war’s end approached, many in liberal circles feared an outbreak of racial violence. Members of the SRC recalled the racial violence that surged in the post-World War I era, which led to the creation of the CIC. While men like Robert Tye hoped naively for an immediately improved and morally redeemed America, one envisioned by Myrdal in his *American Dilemma*, the SRC (like Nash) was bracing for the worst and fully expected an increase in white-on-black violence based on the pattern that ensued following World War I.

As predicted, in 1946, the first year of the post-war period, racial violence erupted in cities across the South, and many episodes involved African American World War II veterans. Incidents ranged from race riots in Columbia, Tennessee to a quadruple lynching in Monroe, Georgia that included the murder of a pregnant woman. In some cases, such as in the Columbia, Tennessee event, an attitude of new-found confidence gave those African Americans who were attacked the courage to push back against Jim Crow – and ultimately they gained a victory.

However, those situations were rare, and others resulted in murders and attacks across the South – most of which went unpunished.

Nash recalls that “[T]he riots in 1946 steadily went to the top of the scale” that he and Daniels

---

143 Leuchtenburg, p. 172.

144 In this sentence, I pay homage to historian Adam Fairclough and the title of his work, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).


had devised, meaning that he characterized them as “words, missiles, and blows.”

African American veterans would not easily attain the equality at home for which they had fought in Europe and Asia. It seemed as if a hardcore resistance was birthed in order to maintain the southern status quo, and in doing so it choked the optimism that veterans like Robert Tye envisioned.

1.13 The Federal Government Takes a Stand: The Formation of the PCCR

Following the Monroe (aka Moore’s Ford) lynching of four African Americans (two women and two men – one of whom was a World War II veteran), protestors from African American organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women, the National Negro Congress, and female members of the NAACP picketed the White House demanding that Truman take action to end lynching. Additionally, the black press urged Truman to act, and private citizens – both black and white – wrote letters and sent telegrams to the White House, many of them also insisting that Truman take action.

Although there were several heinous race crimes in 1946, Nash recalls that the beating and blinding of returning black veteran Isaac Woodward in February 1946 “moved President Truman to action,” and it was the description of the Woodward case that prompted Nash’s “long-dormant Commission – proposed but never actualized in WWII to be “revived.” Woodward, a World War II veteran trying to get to his home in North Carolina, was traveling from Camp Gordon in Georgia via Greyhound bus. After he had the effrontery to take too long at a rest stop, the angered bus driver made a stop at the Batesburg, South Carolina police station.

---

There, Woodward was dragged from the bus and beaten brutally by police officers. The police chief, L. I. Shaw, “gouged Woodward’s eyes with a billy club.”

In September, 1946, following lynchings that occurred over seven months from February to August, Truman met with a coalition comprised of members from the NAACP, Urban League, Federal Council of Churches and the American Federation of Labor. This group called themselves the National Emergency Committee Against Mob Violence (NECAMV). Four days later, Truman met with representatives from the “left wing of the civil rights spectrum,” including members “from the National Negro Congress, the SCHW, and the National Council of Negro Women.” It was during these series of meetings that the dormant idea for a national committee reemerged. This time around, with Truman in the White House and feeling intense pressure from an assertive black coalition and scrutiny from the eyes of the world upon the United States as the Cold War loomed, the president approved the idea.

In staffing the civil rights committee, Niles sought assistance from Nash and others, and he attempted to reach balance by amassing a group that was interracial and represented a cross section of “industry, labor, legal professionals, higher education in the South, the American Negro community, and various religious denominations.” Ultimately, Niles selected fifteen people to staff the committee.

Two members represented corporate America. Heading the committee would be Charles E. Wilson, president of the General Electric Company. Wilson would have a colleague from corporate America in Charles Luckman. Luckman was a Jewish American who was the president of Lever Brothers.

---

Labor was represented on the committee by two members: James Carey, secretary-treasurer of the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) and Boris Shiskin, an economist for the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

John S. Dickey, president of Dartmouth College, was one representative from higher education. Dickey had previously served as Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy from 1934-1936. He was also a United States delegate to the United Nations Conference on International Organization held in San Francisco in 1945, serving as assistant to the legal advisor of the United States Department of State.  

Another member was Morris Ernst, who was a New York City lawyer, author and co-founder of the American Civil Liberties Union. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., who had chaired the Housing Committee of the Americans Veterans Committee, also accepted an appointment to the committee.

Various religious denominations were also represented. Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn, the Jewish chaplain of the Fifth Marine Division at Iwo Jima, served along with the Reverend Francis Haas, the Catholic bishop of Grand Rapids, Michigan and a well-reputed labor mediator, who had recently served as the chair of the President’s Committee of Fair Employment Practice. The Reverend Henry Knox Sherrill, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church also served. Francis P. Matthews, who had recently ended his tenure as the Supreme Chairman Knight of the Knights of Columbus, was from Omaha, Nebraska where he practiced law. During the war, he ran the

Catholic Church’s “component of the United Services Organization” and afterward became the vice president of that organization. After his work on the PCCR, Truman appointed him Secretary of the Navy in 1949, and later Ambassador to Ireland. On the PCCR, he represented a lay religious affiliation.

Two members were African Americans - Sarah (Sadie) Tanner Mossell Alexander and Dr. Channing Tobias. Alexander, of Philadelphia, was the first female African American to earn a Ph.D. in the United States, and the first woman to graduate from the law school at the University of Pennsylvania. She was a partner in her husband’s Philadelphia law firm and a member of the Board of Directors of the National Urban League. Tobias had at one time been the Associate Director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and was former Senior Secretary to the Young Men’s Christian Association. At this time he directed the Phelps-Stokes Fund. Tobias would later serve as the Chair of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and he would be serving in this capacity in 1954 when the NAACP won the landmark Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision at the United States Supreme Court.

Lastly, two members were white southern liberals. Dr. Frank Porter Graham, the president of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was a nationally-known southern liberal who had been a founder and president of the SCHW and was heavily involved with the War Labor Board, the President’s Commission on Education, and the Council of United Nations on In-
Dorothy Tilly, Secretary of the Methodist Church Women’s Division, was also at the time serving on the National Committee on Segregation in the Nation’s Capital. In the 1930s, Tilly had built a reputation among southern churchwomen as an ardent anti-lynching activist in the ASWPL. During the war, Tilly had served under Will W. Alexander in the Farm Security Administration. Both Graham and Tilly believed that segregation was morally wrong and that eventually and gradually, through education, interracial experiences, and a focus on brotherhood and understanding between the races, segregation would be eliminated. They had participated in activism in the South where they knew social progress had been made, albeit slowly but enduring.

While Niles worked at getting commitments from those invited to join this committee, Attorney General Tom Clark and others worked on the executive order that would officially create it. Before Truman created the PCCR, the term “civil rights” was not common in the American lexicon. Nash recalled that it was “new terminology” in the 1940s and that “the use of the word ‘civil rights’… came about in the course of our staff studies. We thought it advisable to find a term that was slightly fresh, and the words civil rights were not used for this function at that time.” The term “civil rights” allowed the PCCR to redefine the problem of race relations in the United States in part because, as Nash recalled, this new term was critical, for “as soon as


162 Information on Tilly’s membership on the National Committee on Segregation in the Nation’s Capital is from Donald R. McCoy and Richard T. Reutten, Quest and Response: Minority Rights in the Truman Administration, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1973), p. 151.

163 Nash as quoted in Michael R. Gardner, Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks (Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), p. 15. Gardner notes that “Truman’s creation of the Presidential Committee on Civil Rights was unprecedented, but even the use of the term civil rights represented a new semantic approach to the old problem of racial discrimination in America.”
we created a President’s Committee on Civil Rights, it acquired its own meaning.”165 This use of the term “civil rights” to name the committee constituted a departure from the past because these words conveyed the concept that all Americans, including African Americans had civil rights that deserved and required protection.

With his issuing of Executive Order 9808 in December 1946, Truman officially created the President’s Committee on Civil Rights as conceived by Nash and Niles. The fact that Truman created a committee whose purpose was to investigate civil rights and to recommend, among other things, legislation to cure the ills of American society was indeed a political watershed in United States history. No president before him had created a commission solely for the purpose of addressing civil rights of the country’s citizens. Admittedly, Roosevelt had taken a dramatic step when he created the FEPC, but he had acted politically in order to prevent potentially damaging mass protests during wartime. Furthermore, the FEPC was limited to addressing employment discrimination in the defense industry, not to the broader issue of civil rights. The FEPC was never intended to be an ongoing watchdog agency, and when its charter expired and the war ended, it died and attempts to resurrect it at the federal level proved unsuccessful.166

Truman tasked his Committee with the following:

1. to consider and determine the adequacy of existing federal legislation and to recommend proposed new legislation
2. to consider the broader social, economic and educational aspects of promoting the cause of civil liberty throughout the country; and
3. to consider the work of private organizations whose activities affect civil rights.167

165 Nash, as quoted in Gardner, p. 15; Nash, as quoted in Lawson, ed., To Secure These Rights p. 21.
166 Egerton, pp. 216-217.
167 Meeting Minutes of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights, February 5 and 6, 1947, Box 3, Folder 2, Dorothy Rogers Tilly Papers, 1868-1970, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (hereinafter Tilly Papers, Emory University).
Prior to the Committee beginning its work, its chair Charles E. Wilson named two members as vice-chairs, John S. Dickey and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. Additionally, Wilson organized the Committee into three subcommittees, named the members of these subcommittees, and gave each a charter. Wilson tasked the first subcommittee with the issue of legislation, specifically asking the group to decide “if existing legislation is adequate” and if not, then this subcommittee was tasked with recommending changes to existing legislation or proposing “new legislation.” Serving on this subcommittee were Sherrill, Graham, Matthews, Dickey, and Alexander.168

The second subcommittee’s charter was “to consider the broader aspects of the problem including social, economic, and educational programs that should be recommended and adopted. This group was to consider the effective utilization of existing organizations and mass media. Included in this group were Luckman, Haas, Carey, Tobias, and Gittelsohn.”169

The third subcommittee included Tilly, Ernst, Shiskin, and Roosevelt. Wilson directed this group to address and “consider any other related aspects of the Civil Rights question. For example, anti-racial and religious organizations, discrimination, registration statutes, and the general problem of anonymity of groups operating in derogation of minority and civil rights.”170

The members met over a period of nine months from January 15, 1947 to September 13, 1947, and their work involved both committee and subcommittee meetings.171 They also gathered information from interviews they conducted and from reports and letters received “from forty witnesses, correspondence with nearly 250 private organizations and individuals, as well as

169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
information supplied by twenty-five government agencies and numerous state and local public agencies.”¹⁷² The PCCR’s staff, which actually researched and wrote the PCCR’s report, “were strong advocates of federal intervention to expand civil rights.” The staff included Robert K. Carr, who taught in the government department at Dartmouth; Frances Williams, an African American woman who was “involved in the YWCA…and had served as a race relations advisor in the Office of Price Administration,” a department that employed a lot of liberals; Nancy Wechsler, who “was active in the Americans for Democratic Action;” and Milton D. Stewart, “a former journalist who had studied economics and social philosophy at New York University.”¹⁷³ Of course, Philleo Nash, educated as an anthropologist, was one member of the White House staff who “worked extensively with members of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights” and assisted the PCCR’s staff, as needed.¹⁷⁴

On October 29, 1947 the PCCR delivered its comprehensive report to Truman, and in December 1947 it published its findings as a document entitled, To Secure These Rights, (a phrase they borrowed from the Declaration of Independence).¹⁷⁵ In it, the PCCR put forth three reasons for re-examining the country’s policies and practices on civil rights: “1) a moral reason – the United States can no longer countenance these burdens on our common conscience, these inroads of moral fiber; 2) an economic reason;” and 3) an international reason, because the United States could not “ignore what the world thinks of us or our record.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Berman, p. 67.
¹⁷³ Lawson, ed., To Secure These Rights, p. 20.
¹⁷⁴ Gardner, p. 15 and Nash as quoted in Gardner, p. 15.
¹⁷⁵ Lawson, ed., To Secure These Rights, p. 28.
¹⁷⁶ “To Secure These Rights, A Brief Summary of the Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights,” p. 3, Box 2, Folder 3, President Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights Papers, edited by William E. Juhnke, Black Studies Research Sources: Microfilms from Major Archival and Manuscript Collections, A Microfilm Project of University Publications of America, Inc. Frederick, Maryland. 1984. Microfilm # 1729, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. (hereinafter, PCCR Papers, Emory University).
The Committee’s report made headline news in many papers across the United States.\(^{177}\) It exposed the lies behind segregation: separate was far from equal. Its overriding conclusion that segregation had no place in America and its recommendation that segregation be abolished meant that, for the first time, the federal government met the issue directly, through open and frank discussion among committee members about this topic “and its consequences.”\(^{178}\) Therefore, the PCCR broke through another semantic barrier by making segregation *the* term with which the government and the nation had to contend, dismissing what Nash described as the more “genteel” term, “discrimination.”\(^{179}\) The PCCR even debated the use of the two words segregation and discrimination, ultimately settling on segregation because they concluded that segregation inherently implied discrimination.\(^{180}\)

### 1.14 Human Rights in the United Nations v. Civil Rights in the United States

The 1940s was not only a pivotal decade for civil rights, but also for the human rights movement which gained dramatic momentum during the Holocaust and its wake and in the years before the Cold War began. It was in the early post-war period that the civil rights and human rights movements became inextricably linked. As the war drew to an end and the war effort diminished, the victors created a new world organization called the United Nations (UN). This organization’s charter buttressed the human rights movement that had emerged in the 1930s and

---


\(^{179}\) Ibid.

\(^{180}\) Transcript from the Monday, June 30, 1947 Hanover, New Hampshire Meeting of the PCCR. Microfilm #1729, PCCR Papers, Emory University.
made human rights an international goal with the adoption of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

Economic forces in the 1930s, such as the Great Depression, coupled with the labor movement and a growth of the Communist Party, had created an atmosphere in the 1930s that resulted in a rise in black activism that was unsurpassed in America.\(^{181}\) However, with the harsh backdrop of the Great Depression causing skyrocketing unemployment and poverty levels, and the New Deal that helped mainly white Americans, several black activists recognized that true equality as a goal would remain forever out of their reach without also achieving economic liberty.\(^{182}\)

The nascent UN not only strengthened the human rights movement that had emerged in the 1930s, but it also advanced “enthusiasm for human rights,” and “the mere acknowledgement of the concept by the great powers… was sufficient to unleash a wave of private human rights initiatives.” Furthermore, “government promotion of human rights during the war catalyzed activists and scholars to put their ideas forward in an organized fashion and provided an outlet for their hopes of a better future than a world at war.”\(^{183}\)

After the war, the UN was a critical vehicle by which African American activists sought redress against the egregious violent acts committed against them in this country. African American activists including Walter White and W.E.B. Du Bois believed in the promise of this nascent organization, and both were present at the United Nations’ charter meeting. The UN gave new hope for those seeking justice in the wake of a global war and a Holocaust. A formal body such


\(^{182}\) Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize*, p. 21.

as the UN suggested that victims of human rights violations would not be restricted to the local, state, and federal governmental laws which historically had given short shrift to the plight of African Americans, especially with respect to lynching. Even Franklin Roosevelt acquiesced to Southern Democrats when he would not support a federal anti-lynching law in the 1930s. Rather, the United Nations provided a global forum in which crimes against humanity, regardless of the perpetrator, would be heard and tried. In theory this was perceived by many to be one of the fundamental purposes of the UN, but it was not necessarily the case in practice.

With the founding of the United Nations, the NAACP and other African American organizations “made a strategic decision” to redirect their focus “from civil rights to human rights as the best means to end the segregationist Jim Crow laws of the south.” This effort began with efforts by the NNC, whose organizers had argued in their 1936 “founding manifesto” that what was necessary was a “strategy that would ‘place human rights above property rights’.” Under the leadership of Ralph Bunche, the NNC “submitted an eight-page report to the U.N. in 1946 outlining government oppression against blacks” in the United States. The move ran headlong into what would become the first of many political dead ends due in large part to the growing Cold War and the intensifying anti-communist climate in the United States. In response to Bunche’s report, the United Nations’ Secretariat practically renounced the UN’s human rights focus when he decided that the evidence the NNC provided was insufficient, and moreover, that intervention into the “domestic affairs of states” fell outside the jurisdiction of the UN’s Charter. In an effort to emasculate the NNC’s attempt at petitioning the United States, which jeopardized the country’s reputation as the emerging leader of the free world amidst the growing threat of communism, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) instigated what would become a successful smear campaign against the NNC, labeling it a communist organization and therefore “un-

American.” Consequently, the NNC’s momentum, which had catalyzed in the 1930s, unraveled in the 1940s and the NAACP became, by default, the primary organization to take up the cause of African Americans who sought redress against their own country.\textsuperscript{185}

W.E.B. Du Bois, reinvigorated by the recent progress that India had made with the UN against South Africa, decided to lead the NAACP in petitioning the UN against the United States. This time UN leaders John Humphrey and Eleanor Roosevelt (who was the chair of the UN’s Commission on Human Rights and who also sat on the NAACP board) intervened and cautioned Du Bois against taking action against the United States. Despite being warned against such action, Du Bois forged ahead in hopes of presenting the petition at a “full hearing before the General Assembly session in November 1947.” Humphrey agreed to accept the petition, but only conditionally. Fearing that United States would be portrayed as a flagrant human rights violator at a time when the country’s image as a leader in freedom and democracy in the nascent Cold War was crucial, Humphrey did not permit Du Bois to present the petition publicly to the UN. Instead he relegated the petition to the lower-ranking Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. To further ensure that the petition received no publicity, Humphrey “insisted that the petition be treated as confidential in accordance with the no-power doctrine under ECOSOC resolution 75(V).” In late October 1947, Humphrey received the petition, and within a week the President’s Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR) issued its groundbreaking report, To Secure These Rights. The timing could not have been worse for Du Bois and the NAACP because the United States, in a perverted use of TSTR, focused only on those aspects of the PCCR’s report that showcased “U.S. commitments and activities at the highest levels to improve the conditions of U.S. blacks,” and thus used the report as propaganda.

\textsuperscript{185} Normand and Zaidi, pp. 162-163.
against the NAACP’s petition. Concurrently the State Department, in a blatantly hypocritical effort to shift the spotlight away from the United States’ egregious human rights record, “singled out the human rights problems in the Soviet Union” in a “study of discriminatory practices by other UN member states.” Further damaging Du Bois’ cause, the Soviets countered by using the NAACP’s petition to highlight the United States’ “hypocrisy” as the emerging leader of the free world. This in turn allowed the United States to claim that the NAACP’s petition amounted to nothing more than Soviet and communist propaganda. The UN ultimately “rejected” Du Bois’ petition on technical grounds.187

Within a very short time span, the NAACP and other minority organizations around the world realized that the UN, which had been created in the wake of the Holocaust and World War II to begin a new world order, had failed them miserably. Some NAACP leaders were completely disillusioned with the entire charade. Others such as Walter White recognized that, amidst an intensifying climate of anti-communistic fervor at home, the opportunities in the rights spectrum were narrowing. Rather than waste time in the international human rights arena, which was increasingly becoming a vehicle for United States and British interests against the Soviet Union, White shifted overtly the NAACP’s goal to a less lofty but nonetheless important and perhaps more achievable domestic civil rights agenda.188 This action essentially decoupled the human rights and civil rights movements within the United States.

186 Ibid., pp. 164-165.
187 Ibid., p. 165.
1.15 Conclusion

When dealing with the issue of race relations during presidential administrations, historians have generally tended to focus on the actions and/or inactions and the personal and political motivations of the executive himself. Consequently, the historian becomes more interested in the race relations policy under the executive’s administration, focusing on the outcomes of those policies versus how the policy originated or changed – taking a teleological perspective, if you will, from the outside looking in. During the ten years spanning 1938 to 1948, the race relations policy within the White House under the Roosevelt and Truman administrations changed dramatically. Rather than looking solely at the executives themselves, this chapter examined the individuals who were responsible for forging those policies - those who worked from the inside out.

One individual in particular stands out in this respect, the social scientist named Philleo Nash. Nash’s early tenure in the White House spanned a decade, from 1942 to 1952, thus straddling both the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. Nash began his official work attempting to squash the impact of racial tension on the United States’ war effort. Nash’s work in the Roosevelt administration helps us understand that Roosevelt’s role in race relations was not exclusively an effort to stave off race riots that would hamper the war effort, as is evidenced by the creation of the ACRR. Nash’s critical contribution, however, was that his unique, in-depth research and comprehensive analysis led him to believe that a national race relations committee would be necessary in the post-war era. His influence in helping to create the PCCR was the key element in the transition from the more reactive race relations mode under Roosevelt during wartime to the more progressive civil rights activism under Truman in the post-war era.

Truman’s PCCR was unique in many respects. First, while it was similar to Roosevelt’s FEPC in that both were created via executive order, it differed in important respects. While the PCCR’s role was a finite one, its mission was far broader - to research the matter of civil rights in the nation and to make proposals even for federal legislation, if necessary, to remedy any disparities. The FEPC’s role was limited very specifically to police and adjudicate discrimination complaints within the defense industry.

Additionally, the PCCR’s composition was vastly different from the CIC, the CECS, and the SCHW because Niles and Nash staffed the PCCR with mainly northern liberals. The CIC and then, twenty years later, the CECS and SCHW included only southern liberal members. On the PCCR only two committee members, Graham and Tilly, represented the white liberal south. In essence, it took northern liberals to force the federal government to step in and assume responsibility for racial reform in the nation. In the South, the cautious southern liberal approach would not elicit the accelerated change recommended by Gunnar Myrdal’s new modern racial liberalism or demanded by the wake of racial violence in the early post-war era. So the question for southern liberals became who would move forward and who would be left behind in this nascent civil rights movement. Tilly and Graham, whose activism was grounded in the more universal and fundamental quest for human empathy and understanding between the races, never lost sight of that loftier goal, even at the federally-focused civil rights level.
CHAPTER 2: SOUTHERN DISSENT ON THE PCCR

The interesting thing is that 20 years from now probably Mrs. Tilly and Dr. Graham will have led this very fight the way this report reads, and 20 years from now they will accomplish it. We have tried to find some kind of out now so we don’t stop their progress.¹

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.
September 13, 1947

2.1 Introduction

In September 1946, when David K. Niles began to form the President’s Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR) to address the racial discord that had exploded in the first year of the post-war era, he solicited suggestions from others regarding whom to invite to serve on the committee. Walter White of the NAACP was one who provided recommendations for committee members.² Philleo Nash also provided some input, and both Niles and Nash contacted several “government agencies” for their input and assistance on proposing potential committee members. The key to appointing the members was “to get balance,” because without that, any report issued by a committee “would lack credibility.”³ Secondly, creators of the committee felt a unanimously endorsed report was an essential outcome. If there were “too many advocates with strong positions publicly taken, it would not be unanimous and would lack force.”⁴ This goal of a unanimously-endorsed report eluded the Committee because, while its members were unanimous in their contempt of segregation and stated so in To Secure These Rights (TSTR), they were very

² Walter White to David Niles, September 26, 1946, Box 26, Folder “1945-June 1947 [2of2],” David K. Niles Papers, Harry S. Truman Library (hereinafter, Niles Papers). Dorothy Tilly was one of those recommended by Walter White.
much divided with respect to recommendations regarding ending segregation – specifically in education. Of all the recommendations that the Committee debated, considered, and approved, the elimination of segregation in education was the single major point on which the Committee could not agree. Seven years before the United States Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, this Committee struggled the most with what would become the single most controversial topic in the modern civil rights movement. During Committee meetings, lengthy and heated debates ensued. The ultimate decision the Committee made in recommending sanctions against segregated southern schools would sound the death knell of the southern liberal interracial movement, would simultaneously thrust the federal government into a modern national civil rights movement, and would sow the seeds of massive resistance to this nascent movement.

This chapter deconstructs the debate over this monumental issue at committee meetings held twice during the summer of 1947 – one at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and the second one in September at the Statler Hotel in Washington, D.C. This debate illuminates the rationale for Tilly’s and Graham’s ultimate dissent on this matter. Moreover, this chapter explores the fundamental difference between the passive yet deliberate and lasting human rights type of activism in which Tilly and Graham had participated since the 1930s and the far

---

5 Statement by Robert K. Carr in Transcript from the Monday, June 30, 1947 Hanover, New Hampshire Meeting of the PCCR, President Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights Papers, edited by William E. Juhnke, Black Studies Research Sources: Microfilms from Major Archival and Manuscript Collections, A Microfilm Project of University Publications of America, Inc. Frederick, Maryland, 1984. Microfilm # 1729, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. (hereinafter, PCCR Papers, Emory University).

6 William F. Juhnke, “Creating a New Charter of Freedom: The Organization and Operation of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights, 1946-1948” (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1974). In “Creating a New Charter of Freedom,” Juhnke details the debates from the Hanover, New Hampshire and Statler Hotel meetings. Juhnke’s attention is on the organizational and administrative aspects of these meetings more so than the rationale behind the Tilly and Graham dissent. Juhnke therefore does not limit his focus on these meetings to the issue of segregation in education as I have done.
more accelerated and aggressive - yet narrower - approach which would be the basis for the nascent national civil rights movement that the PCCR would birth.

2.2 The PCCR’s “Enormous Problem”

After the initial Committee meetings in early 1947, Robert K. Carr, the executive director of the PCCR, wrote Graham indicating that he looked forward to the subtle yet significant influence Graham would have on Committee proceedings.

It was a great pleasure to make your acquaintance at the sessions of the Committee this week, and I am frank to say that I cannot help feeling that you are one of the strong members of the Committee who can be counted upon to keep the work moving forward intelligently and promptly.  

Graham, a well-reputed southern liberal, President of the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, and a member of many federal committees, had the reputation of someone with a clear head and cool temperament. He approached sensitive matters of race with a sense of fairness calm. Despite Carr’s desire to have Graham’s contributions on a consistent basis, Graham did not attend Committee meetings regularly. As if his duties at UNC were not demanding enough, Graham kept a hectic schedule with variety of other commitments, all of which eventually caused him some serious health issues. By late 1946 or early 1947, Graham’s doctors diagnosed him with an eye disorder and advised him not to read anything other than what Graham described as “pressing University matters.” Graham’s eye disorder had been a recurring issue

---

7 From Robert Carr to Frank Graham, February 3, 1947, Folder 2026 in the Frank Porter Graham Papers, 1908-1990, #01819, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereinafter, Graham Papers).
8 For more information see Warren Ashby, Frank Porter Graham: A Southern Liberal, (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: J.F. Blair Publisher, 1980). The dust jacket of this work describes Graham as an “accomplished mediator.”
9 From Frank Graham to Dr. Fred Kingsley Elder, April 9, 1947, Folder 1994 in the Graham Papers.
for him ever since he had suffered an attack of the measles, which “settled in his eyes” during his high school senior year.\textsuperscript{10} Despite the seriousness of his eye malady and his doctor’s orders to rest his eyes, Graham continued working on various committees.

In April 1947, Carr began organizing a meeting that would include all PCCR members – not only certain subcommittees. The original deadline of October 1, 1947 to deliver a report to Truman was less than six months away, and he was anxious for his staff to begin drafting the report, sensing that it would need several iterations prior to its finalization. Carr, in his role as executive director of the PCCR, had spent the last four months carefully guiding the Committee, arranging interviews, and ensuring that news clippings of germane items reached the Committee members in a timely manner. Carr had intimate knowledge about each subcommittee’s work and what recommendations would be forthcoming from each, and he was also by this time familiar with the attitudes and demeanors of the various committee members. At this stage of the Committee’s process, he was particularly concerned about some of the forthcoming recommendations and how they would be received by other members, particularly how the Committee would tackle the issue of ending segregation in schools. A recommendation to withhold federal grants in aid from segregated schools would be one of the topics discussed at the forthcoming meeting. Carr knew that Graham, an educator and president of the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, had an abiding interest in public education. Graham also had the benefit of direct experience in this area and had been involved in the Pauli Murray case at UNC at Chapel Hill in which Murray, an African American, applied to the graduate school shortly after the \textit{Missouri v. Gaines} Supreme Court decision. Graham had also long been an advocate for federal aid to edu-

\textsuperscript{10} Ashby, p. 10.
cation and had served on the Advisory Committee on Education in the late 1930s. Carr had previously relied upon Graham’s calm and thoughtful manner, so again he wrote Graham and urged him to attend this critical meeting:

“I am slightly apprehensive about some of the recommendations which may be made to the full Committee by the other two subcommittees and I am extremely anxious for you to be present, if it is at all possible, for I have learned to depend upon you as one of the wise members of the Committee.”

Carr’s prescient, though understated, words of concern accurately predicted the difficulty the committee would have with respect to the segregation in education issue. Carr, in conjunction with James S. Dickey, arranged to have a meeting of the full Committee at Dartmouth College, their employer, in Hanover, New Hampshire. The meeting’s purpose was to provide a setting in which all PCCR members could review, discuss, and decide on final recommendations within a timely manner. This would then enable the staff to move forward in drafting the report.

Once Carr had scheduled the meeting for June 30th and July 1st, he contacted Graham again to persuade him to attend:

“I am wondering whether you have been able to adjust your schedule so as to permit attendance at the Hanover meeting of the Committee. I recall that you were somewhat skeptical of your ability to get out of your other engagement. Yet I cannot help hoping that that has proved possible, for from my point of view, your presence in Hanover would be a valuable asset. I don’t know what we would do without the wise, calm approach which you bring to the work of the Committee, and I am certainly counting on your presence. At the moment there are no clouds on the horizon, but this is a very important session and, as you know, things sometimes tend to get out of hand. You are always a great help when erratic or emotional notes are introduced into the Committee’s

---


12 From Robert Carr to Frank Graham, April 9, 1947, Folder 2029 in the Graham Papers.
Carr knew that the suggestion to withhold federal aid from segregated schools would pose a problem for Graham. Graham, a southerner, educator, and member of Roosevelt’s Advisory Committee on Education, would have had definite opinions on this topic, but despite Carr’s pleas to Graham to attend the Dartmouth meeting, Graham declined Carr’s invitation due to scheduling conflicts. As predicted the major question at this meeting, which could not be resolved, became whether to recommend withholding federal grants from segregated school systems.

The session was held in the Paul Room of the Baker Library on the Dartmouth campus and began the morning of June 30th with twelve of the fifteen PCCR members in attendance: Wilson, Dickey, Roosevelt, Alexander, Ernst, Gittelsohn, Luckman, Matthews, Sherrill, Shishkin, Tilly, and Tobias. After a productive morning session, the group broke for lunch, and when it reconvened Carr opened the discussion with the topic of withholding federal assistance from segregated schools. He began by explaining that the Committee would “not recommend a specific program of federal grants-in-aid, but in a more general way say that we have got to have education as a means of –.” He never got to complete his sentence, because he was interrupted by Rabbi Gittelsohn who explained, “the idea is to get ‘adequate school facilities for all.’” Carr, probably sensing that he had started off the discussion rather clumsily, gathered his thoughts before responding, and when he did he spoke to the entire Committee, laying before them the critical issue on which they had to decide:

You have got to decide whether you want to recommend that

---

13 From Robert K. Carr to “All Members of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights, May 26, 1947 Folder 2026 in the Graham Papers.
14 Transcript from the Monday, June 30, 1947 Hanover, New Hampshire Meeting of the PCCR, Microfilm # 1729, PCCR Papers, Emory University.
federal grants-in-aid be spent in such a way as to guarantee
equality to racial groups, the benefits they receive, or whether
you want to go a step further and absolutely oppose any
segregation.\textsuperscript{15}

With this statement, Carr succinctly clarified the either/or decision confronting them. Not only
was this the sticking point in the Hanover meeting but also became the most important topic the
Committee tackled --and they came to understand that while deliberating.

With Carr’s challenge put forth to the Committee, a vigorous debate ensued. Morris
Ernst was the first to speak, stating unequivocally, “I am for the latter… I wouldn’t want to sign
a report that didn’t come out for that.”\textsuperscript{16} Then, after an input from another Committee member
supporting opposition to any segregation, Tilly advised caution:

I wish all these problems were more clear cut. I am for this, of
course. Yet at the same time if we get this it will delay the day
longer when we will reach a place in the South where we won’t
have the things happening that are happening now.\textsuperscript{17}

Tilly was referring to the mentality of the white South. She was a white southern liberal
who had made strides in human relations since the 1930s. Her vehicle for positive change was
through interracial meetings of southern churchwomen whom she brought together so that they
could develop an understanding and respect for one another. While Tilly did not agree with seg-
regation, in this quiet statement she informed her colleagues that if the white South were forced
to end segregation, it would resist and would undo the social progress she and other southern lib-
erals had attained through their interracial methods.

Referring back to Carr’s statement, Channing Tobias replied that “you can” continue seg-
regated schools with equitable distribution of funds with southern support; “but you can’t get”

\begin{footnotes}
\item[15] Ibid.
\item[16] Ibid.
\item[17] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
that and also withhold funds to force desegregation of schools with southern support – Tilly agreed. Gittelsohn then asked a crucial question, “Do you have a ghost of a chance of getting equality as long as you have segregation?” Tobias conceded that, “It wouldn’t be absolute equality;” however, “you will get something.” And Tilly, who was opposed to the proposed sanctions, concluded by explaining, if we can achieve segregation with equality, then “it will be a step toward” desegregation. Tilly’s comments suggested a strategy of gradual change with the eventual goal of ending segregation in education.

After this initial back and forth among several Committee members, John Dickey offered this insightful comment, highlighting the importance of the Committee’s stance on this subject:

I think this is a really tough proposition for this committee. I have a hunch that it is at the heart of the educational problem that this Committee faces. The other things are not likely to be greatly changed by the Committee’s position, and I may be in the very distinct minority on that. But I think that the position this Committee takes on this issue is of real consequence in the foreseeable future.

His words also portended the school desegregation crisis that erupted seven years later in the mid-1950s, after the United States Supreme Court issued its Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision, which declared segregation to be unconstitutional.

Dickey next addressed the manner in which he believed segregation might be ended, and that was with better educated teachers in the South.

I think you have got to get started at this thing where prejudice apparently takes its hold, with the youngster in the elementary schools and coming out of the control of the family into the control of the school.

I don’t see how there is ever a chance that we will get at this problem in the South until, to put it bluntly, Northern money is made available to

---

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
help them, or money from the rest of the country, to raise the quality and
the quantity of the teaching of the whites in their schools. I believe that
as you raise the salary of your teachers you will get a more sophisticated
person….

…until you begin and find and attract that type of person into the public
school systems of the South, I have very little hope that we will breed
a community which will do very much down there about things like
lynching.\textsuperscript{20}

Like Tilly, Dickey favored federal grants-in-aid being used to equalize education within
the segregated schools as a first step toward desegregation. The NAACP initially employed this
strategy, seeking to equalize the schools, as it believed that the southern states could not afford
two genuinely equal but separate school systems.\textsuperscript{21} Dickey, obviously troubled by this issue, ad-
mitted to the members present that he initially disagreed with continuing federal grants-in-aid,
but after much reflection on the subject felt strongly that his position was ultimately “very short-
sighted” and “would be a setback to the federal aid to education” which Dickey supported.\textsuperscript{22}

Seeing that there were two opinions forming over this issue, Morris Ernst offered some-
what of a compromise in the form of a “time lag,” suggesting that the Committee recommend
that after 1951 no more federal funds be utilized in segregated schools. At this point, Tilly, who
must have been grateful for the support voiced by Dickey, jumped in again, admitting that she
was “terribly troubled” about her stance and expanded on Dickey’s position stating, “Unless we
get federal aid to education we cannot raise the teacher’s salaries…. And when we do get to
where we can raise the salary we get a better teacher and then you raise the whole attitude of the

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} For more on the \textit{Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas} case and decision, see Richard Kluger,
\textit{Simple Justice: The History of \textit{Brown v. Board of Education} and Black America’s Struggle for Equality}, (New
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
community.” What Tilly was saying implicitly was that raising the whole attitude of the community would result in a voluntary and sustained end to segregation, rather than a forced end which she believed would fail and also backfire. Ernst, troubled by Tilly’s position, countered with, “What happens to our report if our sights are low enough to indirectly condone segregation.” As a southern white liberal who had worked in human relations in the South for over twenty years, Tilly understood better than anyone in the meeting that there was no easy answer when it came to education and segregation and the South, and rather than continue a seemingly endless argument, all she could offer back at that time was, “I am terribly disturbed about this.” Tilly found herself in a predicament because she knew fundamentally that segregation was morally wrong and she was absolutely opposed to it, yet she had to support federal grants-in-aid for all southern schools. Her motivations stemmed from her years of work in southern race relations and human rights and her own experiences in dealing with whites and their attitudes toward minorities, specifically African Americans. Tilly understood that most people’s thoughts about race would not change until and unless the people themselves changed from within. She and some other southern liberals believed optimistically that these transitions in attitudes could be achieved over time by education and communication across the racial barriers. This method would lead to acceptance of others and the elimination of prejudices, which would eventually allow for a voluntary and therefore lasting integrated society. Tilly believed that punishing the South by withholding federal money from southern schools would certainly anger white supremacists. It would, more importantly, also retard the progress that had been made in the South thus far, by lowering educational standards for the children and continuing school segregation with no hope for educational advances to ultimately choke out Jim Crow school systems. Tilly’s advo-

---

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
cacy for using education to gradually eradicate prejudice was espoused by other southern liberal
groups working in human relations during the 1940s. Those who wanted to force the change
were emblematic of a shift that emerged in the 1940s about other ways in which to counteract
racism. Tilly then explained how the white supremacist South would refuse federal funds for
education if they came with a price:

In the South when you face this they will say ‘This affects states’
Rights,’ and also it would affect their attitude towards federal aid
to education and they would say ‘We prefer to be ignorant than
to have the government tell us how to live.’

While many southern states refused federal intervention in the case of education because
they favored states’ rights, this argument overlapped with the issue of race. Tilly’s and Dickey’s
answer was that by keeping the federal grants-in-aid, the quality of education overall would be
better, which should lead toward the goal of lasting integration.

Gittelsohn re-entered the discussion, attempting to breach the divide between Tilly and
Ernst by asking, “Would the South feel any better about it if we said to them ‘You must apportion
the funds on an equal basis?’” Then, deferring to Tilly he asked, “Will they do what we say
they must do?” His words reflect optimism and also naïveté, for Tilly knew the South would
not voluntarily do what the Committee ultimately recommended and would not make any change
with respect to civil rights until forced to do so.

Seemingly at an impasse, Carr interjected the following summary in the hopes of making
some progress:

25 See for example, Stuart Svonkin, Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Lib-
erties, William E. Leuchtenburg and Alan Brinkley, ed., Columbia Studies in Contemporary American History Series
27 Transcript from the Monday, June 30, 1947 Hanover, New Hampshire Meeting, Microfilm # 1729,
PCCR Papers, Emory University.
28 Ibid.
It seems to me, as I listen to the two points of view, that everyone is against segregation and that can be said in a straightforward fashion in the report. The argument is really about the method by which you are going to overcome segregation in the end, whether by immediate sanction that would withhold funds from the state, or whether you are going to put your hope in the educational effect of better facilities over a longer period of time.\textsuperscript{29}

Gittelsohn admitted immediately that, as a private citizen he would be satisfied with a gradual elimination of segregation, but not in his role as a PCCR committee member, stating “…I cannot conceive of signing my name to a report which by any stretch of the imagination condones segregation.” He furthermore believed that by applying sanctions toward desegregation, the PCCR is basically saying to the American public, “we don’t care about segregation for the moment.”\textsuperscript{30}

Everyone at the meeting realized the importance of this decision. Moreover, the debate illuminated the fundamental difference in the human relations activism of Tilly, who believed that education would lead to lasting change versus the emerging civil rights approach to force change first and then educate those who are unwilling to accept the change. Tilly’s experiences focused on working to change the hearts of racist individuals so that eventually they would accept the differences of others and voluntarily discard segregation. The new and forthright civil rights approach represented a more radical liberalism, and in these committee meetings, it became apparent that the survival of the southern liberal approach, which had been the white-led, progressive agent of change in the South for almost three decades, was in jeopardy.

This argument illustrated that Nash and Niles had successfully formed a Committee with diverse and thoughtful viewpoints. It also indicated that, for this issue, a unanimous concurrence was not likely to be achieved. Ernst was the first to articulate that realization:

\begin{quote}
It seems to me that this is one of those fundamental things, and you
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
may find it in other aspects like the Armed Forces and elsewhere, where there isn’t unanimity and I am frank to say that unanimity procured at the sacrifice of getting at the lowest common denominator isn’t worth much for the American public, not from the Committee. The Congress or the President may have to do it, but the Committee in reporting ought to have higher sights.\textsuperscript{31}

At this time, Charles Luckman chimed in by paraphrasing Dickey’s lengthy comments from several minutes earlier and proposed a solution for the segregation in education issue. “The solution to it lies rather solely in the field of education of our young people as well as our adults….” Therefore, he argued that federal funds were necessary to bolster youth education “with a view toward using that education for the complete elimination of discrimination and segregation.”\textsuperscript{32} Gittelsohn countered that no amount of money will work, because the whites and blacks would still be segregated in schools, and that experience alone led white children to believe that black children were not good enough to be in school with them.\textsuperscript{33} Tilly did not agree with Gittelsohn because, she explained, many southern liberals were educated in segregated schools. Several minutes later, after realizing that her statement might be misinterpreted, Tilly qualified her statement by claiming that she was simply stating fact that most southern liberals were educated in segregated schools, and yet they became liberal-minded adults. Tilly, in an unpopular and isolated position, felt the need to ensure the more radical team members understood her position when she declared

\begin{quote}
I would dislike very much to put my name to something that didn’t go all the way against discrimination and segregation, but I am merely bringing in this other side.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[31] Ibid.
\item[32] Ibid.
\item[33] In the late 1930s and early 1940s social scientists Kenneth Clark and Mamie Philips Clark conducted groundbreaking studies, commonly known as “the doll studies” that concluded segregation was damaging to African American children.
\item[34] Transcript from the Monday, June 30, 1947 Hanover, New Hampshire Meeting. Microfilm # 1729, PCCR Papers, Emory University.
\end{footnotes}
Tilly believed in her tried-and-true tactics in human relations, thus she felt torn between her proposed methods and the far more demanding civil rights approach. Tilly was used to being involved in a movement that had a much slower pace to it, with lofty and meaningful goals, yet no hard deadlines. Personally, Tilly disavowed segregation but her goal for the South was ultimate integration and, with the exception of her anti-lynching activism, which was at times harried and dangerous, the work she performed with church groups and organizations involved in the interracial movement provided an optimistic, if sometimes unsteady and always plodding, course of social change. However, as a member of the PCCR, Tilly was having a very difficult time managing the aggressive nature of this proposed change to abruptly withhold federal money from southern schools to force their desegregation. It was not just the segregated South that was under attack; it was the methods by which she and other southern churchwomen and southern liberals had used to breach the racial divide: with interracial meetings, education, and coming to understand members of the other race as human beings. This is why Tilly feared that forcing desegregation upon an unwilling white South would fail and foil the progress already being made toward the ultimate goal.

At this apparent standoff, Committee Chair Charles Wilson suggested that the Committee take a vote, either for a strong statement about discrimination and segregation or for withholding federal grants-in-aid to force school desegregation. Wilson’s suggestion went unanswered as more discussion ensued with other members commenting about the importance of this one decision. Luckman described it as an “enormous problem” and Carr concurred, offering again that

---

this issue was the most difficult point for the Committee to decide.\textsuperscript{36} This lengthy debate about schools revealed an underlying disagreement about how to successfully promote change in racial attitudes.

When the Committee discussed the issue of segregation within the context of other areas, such as the Armed Forces and Housing and Health, Ernst questioned whether the PCCR should take one stance regarding federal funding and segregation for one area, such as Housing and Health, versus another stance when it came to education. Carr, realizing that the argument on education had already utilized a lot of meeting time while several more agenda items waited, suggested that his staff write two versions of this issue within the report’s draft. This approach would provide PCCR members a way to see both options in writing before making a final decision. At this point, Dickey, who also understood that there might not a unanimous vote on this issue, suggested a statement be inserted noting that the majority of members felt that sanctions were indicated but saying nothing regarding a minority opinion.\textsuperscript{37}

After spending the entire afternoon discussing this topic, the committee members present took a straw vote, which resulted in a slim majority of six to five in favor of federal sanctions. During this tense meeting, Carr ably filled the calm and deliberative role for which he had called upon Graham. At the meeting’s conclusion, Carr restated his recommendation about writing two drafts and before the group took a recess, he suggested the following: the group did not want to recommend a positive grant-in-aid for education, but it was not ruling it out and perhaps would be able to even offer a modified recommendation. At this point in the meeting discussion on this topic was completed, and the group adjourned for a recess.\textsuperscript{38} However, discussion on this topic

\textsuperscript{36} Transcript from the Monday, June 30, 1947 Hanover, New Hampshire Meeting, Microfilm #1729, PCCR Papers, Emory University.\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
was far from over. Within six weeks, PCCR’s staff would issue a draft of the report, and the Committee would meet again. This time Frank Graham would be in attendance, and the debate would again quickly escalate.

2.3 Tilly’s Predictions

About a week after the conclusion of the PCCR’s meetings at Dartmouth College, Robert Carr wrote to Frank Graham. Carr updated Graham on the events of the meeting and the plans going forward:

This is a just a brief note to let you know that the Committee came through its Hanover meeting with all flags flying and no casualties! The sessions went extremely well – more so, I think, than anyone had dared hope.

The Committee voted to authorize the Staff to write a draft report under the supervision of a subcommittee to be appointed by Mr. Wilson. It is hoped that this draft report will be ready by the middle of August or shortly thereafter. The plan is to send out this draft report to the Committee members, giving them a preliminary opportunity to read it and to submit suggestions and criticisms by mail. Then it is planned to hold a two or three day session of the Committee in Washington during the first week in September to give the report a final going over. The report would then be put in final shape for submission to President Truman about October 1.39

From Carr’s letter, one might infer that the Hanover meeting went so smoothly that the report was ready to be drafted. What Carr failed to mention was that all but two items had been agreed to by the other Committee members: “[E]ducational sanctions and fair educational practices.”40 Nevertheless, after the Hanover meeting Carr felt that he had enough information for him and his staff to draft a report for review, so he and the staff set about writing the first draft. In late August, Carr’s staff distributed the first report draft of To Secure These Rights to all

39 From Robert Carr to Frank Graham, July 9, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers.
PCCR members for their comment and scheduled the Committee’s final review meeting for September 12th-13th in Washington, D.C. at the Statler Hotel.

Despite the Committee’s agreeing to have the staff draw up two versions of the recommendation regarding federal sanctions in education, this draft contained only the recommendation to withhold federal funds from school systems that were racially segregated. Tilly, who had been in the minority on this issue at the Dartmouth meeting, wrote a lengthy dissent to Carr and Wilson, which they received prior to the September meeting.

Admitting that she was “deeply troubled about the report,” Tilly’s letter suggested several changes. There were specific issues at which she directed most of her comments. In reading through the draft, Tilly believed that the Committee was “putting too much hope on legislation as a cure all.” She reminded Wilson and Carr that in the South, things did not work “by the normal processes of democratic, constitutional government,” and then asked rhetorically with a reference to prohibition, “did the Volstead Act work?”

It was the recommendation to withhold federal funds from segregated schools as an attempt to force an end to segregated education that most worried Tilly, and she reminded the two gentlemen of the Dartmouth meeting during which this topic became the subject of heated debate.

I told you of my reaction to the segregation approach at Dartmouth. I have been in summer schools and conferences week after week since then. We have had discussion on the “separate but equal” statutes of our southern states. The question of one school system makes the groups always ‘see red’. As I said before, the South will stay ignorant before it will be forced to having non-segregated schools. I believe every Southern newspaper will attack the report editorially on this score.

42 Mrs. M.E. Tilly to Mr. C. E. Wilson and Mr. Robt. Carr, September 8, 1947, Microfilm # 1729, PCCR Papers, Emory University.
I am afraid, too, this will definitely kill the Federal Aid to Education Bill in Congress….

I think the section on segregation will definitely kill any chance we might have of getting any legislation on any part of the report through Congress and will keep us from having a permanent Civil Rights Committee, the anger is going to be so great against the present committee.43

Despite Tilly’s personal repudiation of segregation, which had occurred during the 1930s, she knew that the majority of white southerners would reject unconditionally any push, especially by the federal government, to end segregation. Moreover, Tilly believed the sanctions approach suggested in the draft simply would not work. Tilly knew she had come gradually to her decision against segregation and, over time, with education and understanding, she had come to accept African Americans as equals. She knew others could not be forced to change.44 Tilly truly believed that progress was being made in the South… albeit slowly, but deliberately. She had to convince the other Committee members that forcing change would elicit a resistance to that change, and would either impede or prevent the achievement of a lasting social change.

When Tilly read the report draft, she also saw all too clearly that the South stuck out like a sore thumb as the nation’s most egregious section with respect to treatment of minorities. The report’s tone must have been reminiscent of Roosevelt’s NEC Report on the Economic Conditions of the South, which less than ten years earlier had focused on the South’s economy, and Roosevelt himself had labeled the region “the nation’s No. 1 economic problem.” Many white southerners had reacted negatively and defensively to that insult yet that report had been written by southern liberals.45 The draft of the PCCR’s report was written mainly by northern liberals,

43 Ibid.
under the aegis of the federal government. Tilly knew that the white South would react negatively against it. Angered, she accused the report and the Committee of being “too intolerant.” She chided them, “[A]ren’t we attempting to teach tolerance in it (i.e., the report), then surely we have just got to watch ourselves. The most intolerant people are those who are intolerant of intolerance and this is what we are showing in the report.”

More important, though, this approach in Tilly’s eyes would kill any chance of education improving the situation in southern segregated schools – and as a result, the South’s children, black and white, would continue to suffer. As such, she implored Carr and Wilson to allow a rewrite of certain sections of the report:

Now about my South and the report. The report is too beligerant [sic]. It is rather vicious as it raises a ‘whip-hand’ against the South…. I admit the accusations are just but we will have to use another method or else we undo the social progress the South has made in the last twenty-five years…. We cannot avoid facing the segregation – but make it with a different approach. The report sounds like we are mad at someone or some section of our nation….

After all, do we not want to strengthen the civil rights of our people? Isn’t this the real purpose of our committee? As the report is, it will be rejected by the South and the South knows how to REBEL.”

Tilly’s argument had not wavered; she once again made the argument of how hard it was to change attitudes about race. She knew that, despite the progress that had been made in race relations, a backlash was mounting across many southern communities, especially with the return of black veterans from World War II and court rulings on the white primary. She predicted that an anti-South report would help solidify and grow the network of the backlash across the South.

With respect to politics, Tilly foreshadowed the split in the Democratic Party and the creation of

---

46 Mrs. M.E. Tilly to Mr. C. E. Wilson and Mr. Robt. Carr, September 8, 1947, Microfilm # 1729, PCCR Papers, Emory University.
47 Ibid.
the States Rights Party reactionary force when she warned in her letter, “I doubt if President Truman will feel it wise to sign it as it is. If he does and the report is really taken seriously (as we hope it will be), the South might speak at the National Convention.”48

2.4 An Anti-South and Unbalanced Report

Tilly was not the only Committee member who perceived the report as negative. During the two-day meeting held September 12-13, 1947 in Washington, D.C., the Committee reviewed the draft together, and several other Committee members also voiced their concern about the overall negative tone permeating the report. Charles Luckman in particular was concerned about how the American people would react to this report, in which it seemed everything was wrong in America. He described the report as “one-sided” “and not sufficiently constructive”. He warned “that you don’t make progress in America if you say to the American people, ‘Everything is bad.’”49 Luckman, a Jewish American, was also concerned with the lopsided attention given to African Americans in the report versus all the other minorities. He explained,

I am not sure that we seem to be as interested in all minorities as we are in the one. If you total up the mentions – which I happened to do yesterday afternoon while I was pretending to be Baruch sitting out on a park bench here, having nothing else to do for a little while – there are 362 mentions of one minority, and the next highest is 16. Now that is a tremendous gap to the people who read the report, and I am afraid that there may appear to be an emphasis.50

Though there was an emphasis on African Americans, Luckman did not suggest deletions from the report but sought ways in which other minorities could also be highlighted within it.

Sadie Alexander and Channing Tobias, the two African Americans on the Committee both

48 Ibid.
49 Transcription from PCCR Meeting, September 12-13, 1947, p. 738, Box 195, Nash Papers.
50 Ibid., p. 747.
quickly interjected comments, justifying the tone and focus of the report. Alexander explained, “The staff pointed out the fact that it would appear at times that there was one minority, but it was because there were so many more transgressions on their rights.” Tobias chimed in, “I think Mr. Luckman will just have to recognize the fact – as we all do, of course – that the proportion is just true to the facts, just true to the experiences of the minorities themselves. There are just certain things that the Negro minority suffers that other minorities don’t suffer.” Luckman acquiesced and Tobias explained:

> Because of their high visibility, it makes it easy to discriminate. It is a different type of thing, in a way; so little progress has been made on it as compared to the progress that has been made with other groups. You have state laws directed against the group. You just can’t help but call attention to the facts.

> It would be a very much finer thing if we could just have a balance thing, to speak of Mexicans, Jews, Negroes, in a way that wouldn’t call positive attention to one group more than the other; but that isn’t the fact in American life today. We are just reflecting the situation as it is.51

Tobias did not interpret the report to be negative, as did Luckman, but rather a “factual” report. Carr reiterated the committee’s desire to not produce “a balance sheet but rather a careful examination of the places where change is needed or further progress is called for.”52 Alexander, agreeing with Carr and Tobias, reminded the others of their task, as she perceived it to be:

> We were not told to go out and find out what good has been done. Our assignment was to find out what had to be done to correct any evils. That is our assignment; and if, incidentally, we can say ‘There are good things,’ it is allright, but we can’t have a lengthy report in which we go around the United States and say as to everything good that has been done, because that is not our assignment.53

---

51 Ibid., p. 748.
52 Ibid., p. 728.
53 Ibid.
Later in the discussion, when the focus shifted to police brutality against minorities, the South once again was singled out. This time Frank Graham objected, asking that more balance be introduced into the draft. Alexander spoke up against removing some language to soften the message: “Mr. Wilson, I am not anxious to put any burden on the South, but... the fact is that the incidence of police brutality against Negroes in the South is disturbingly high. That is the fact, isn’t it, Mr. Carr?” To which Carr replied, “Certainly, it is.” She then read the next sentence from the draft, “‘In no other section of the country do comparable outrages occur so frequently’***[sic].” and she then asked Graham, “Is that a fact, Mr. Graham?” Graham responded, “I think the total number is largely in the South. When you say ‘comparable,’ then I think the Japanese in California would have much to say in this period.” The group agreed to soften the language in this section. Tilly, who had been away from the room for a period of time, re-entered it during this exchange and, at the first chance interjected, “I think all the way through we have brought out the South too much.” Wilson, attempting to keep the discussion on task, reassured Tilly that the group had agreed and some of the harsher language would be modified.54

As the Committee members went through the report page by page, various members raised other topics. Following those discussions and resolutions, Graham directed Carr’s attention to what he described as a “quite inaccurate” passage regarding voting by African Americans in the South. He explained, “it starts, ‘The denial of the suffrage on account of race.’ It says most Southern States completely disenfranchised the Negro.” Tilly interrupted, “And the last sentence is too strong.” Graham continued,

54 Ibid., pp. 774-775, Nash Papers. Regarding Graham’s comment about the Japanese Americans, he would have had the most knowledge of this situation compared with other Committee members due to his service as a sponsor on the Japanese American Citizens League, which he joined in February 1944. In February 1944 Graham accepted an offer “to serve as a sponsor of the Japanese American Citizens League.” For more information, see, for example, letter from Teiko Ishida to Dr. Graham, February 23, 1944, Folder 1944:: Japanese Americans, in the Graham Papers. See also Ashby, pp. 229-230.
It says, ‘In the past 2 years, the situation has changed to the point where it can be said that some Negroes in the deep South have begun tentatively, insecurely, and hesitantly to exercise the political rights of free Americans.’ You start out with ‘most Southern states,’ you give the instance of progress limited by 2 years, and say the ‘deep South.’ If people didn’t know, you wouldn’t realize from this paragraph that Negroes in the upper South have been voting for 20 years, to my knowledge, in considerable numbers. Sometimes they are the decisive factor in the vote in Raleigh, North Carolina.55

Graham’s criticism was valid since many northerners inaccurately perceived the South to be monolithic. He then asked Channing Tobias for confirmation, “It says, ‘tentative, insecurely, and hesitantly.’ Even in the deep South, Mr. Tobias, aren’t Negroes voting openly at the polls?” To which Tobias replied, “Especially now. That is true in Georgia. It is true even in Mississippi, where two white men recently fought each other over the issue.”56 Graham understood that the South, even as a distinct region within the United States, was not homogenous. Moreover, Graham cautioned Carr about making reckless statements such as the one he caught, claiming they would “undermine the value of the report.”57 Graham explained “When you read this paragraph, if you didn’t know the facts you would get a very inaccurate picture of the situation. That furnishes material to the enemies who don’t want this progress, and then it infuriates the people who have been fighting for the progress and have made some achievement.”58 Like Tilly, Graham had worked in southern human relations for decades, and as a southern liberal, he worried that this report, if not tempered, would become an incendiary for those who only wanted to squash any form of racial progress and, if inaccurate, would be ignored by those whites who desired change.

55 Ibid., pp. 808-809.
56 Ibid., p. 809.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
The debate continued on about whether to amend the statement or remove it altogether until Tilly found another troubling sentence. “It says, ‘But resistance to political rights of Negroes in most of the South today is so intense and the gains of the past few years so limited that the future seems very uncertain.’ I don’t think the future seems uncertain at all.” Carr chided her, “Now, Mrs. Tilly, I don’t quite believe you mean that. You have been telling me about all sorts of uncertainties in the future.” To that she retorted, “I don’t mean in the next day or two, but we are making progress all the time in the Negro vote.””59 Frustrated, Carr argued, “I think some of these generalizations should be changed, but we can’t make it out that all the Negroes are voting in the South.” Graham shot back, “And you can’t make it out that only in the last two years a few have started to vote.”60 While Graham’s statement was true, it was not until Smith v. Allright and other similar cases that more African Americans started to vote. Until then, very few did.61

Tilly’s and Graham’s sensitivity to statements that seemed to completely invalidate the progress that activists like Tilly and Graham had spent decades implementing is understandable. Tilly and Graham represented southern liberalism to the PCCR and, during these meetings, southern liberalism was increasingly put on the defensive. Graham explained, however, that when he and/or Tilly reference a “mistake like this, we don’t mean for you to go to the other extreme.”62 Their motivation was to ensure that the report would be as accurate as possible, in all areas. They understood that while minorities might be reading the report, the ones they were most concerned with were white reactionaries and southern moderates and liberals reading the report – who would be looking for something that they could use to refute the report. Tilly had

---

59 Ibid., p. 810.
60 Ibid.
61 For more on southern voting patterns in the first half of the twentieth century, see V.O. Key, Southern Politics (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949).
commented about the report earlier that day when discussion centered on an example of police brutality and murder of black inmates. She requested, “I want it [the report] fixed so that they [i.e., the South] can hang their hats; I don’t want to find something they cannot hang their hats on….the South will pick on something that they can attack.”63

A lengthy argument then ensued regarding higher education institutions and mandating anti-discrimination policies. At the conclusion of that debate, the Committee adjourned for dinner. Before they left, Charles Wilson set a serious tone for the post-dinner agenda: “As soon as we convene at eight o’clock we are going to take up this grant-in-aid question and I hope everybody will be here, because it is a controversial one and I want you all to know, in case anyone is planning not to be here, that that is going to be before us and we will probably reach a settlement on it. I hope we shall.”64

2.5 Desegregation in Education – The Sticking Point

Tilly was armed and ready for debate at the evening session of the September meeting. Earlier that day on September 12, 1947, she reprised her concerns over the federal grants-in-aid issue, before the Committee actually tackled that point. Making mention of the recommendation in the report draft, Tilly warned:

There is a sentence there that is going to upset the Confederacy again – ‘But this impending development raises the fair question whether the country as a whole should be asked to help bear the added costs of maintaining a pattern of segregation’. That is a true statement, but can’t we soften it a little. I am afraid that is going to be one of the things that is going to make us awfully mad.”65

63 Ibid., p. 783.
64 Ibid., p. 888-889.
65 Ibid., p. 861.
Charles Wilson poked a little fun here and, playing off her reference to the Confederacy, asked: “And fight the war all over again?” To which Tilly retorted: “Yes. Just don’t make it too hard on us; try to understand us a little bit and don’t rub it in so much.” In defending her position, Tilly explained, “It was stated a while ago that each section of the country would highlight something (i.e., from the report). This is what will be highlighted in the South, this whole question of segregation in education. It is going to overshadow everything else in the report, in my opinion.”

A full seven years prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* United States Supreme Court decision, Tilly understood that this issue of education and segregation in the South was the critical issue, and depending on which way the committee decided, Tilly knew it could be a deal killer for the white South, although in all likelihood the South would have resisted anyway. Moreover, Tilly believed that by withholding federal funds from segregated schools the children would suffer in the end, and the tactic would further delay integration.

When the Committee reconvened at 8:00PM, chair Charles Wilson called the group to order and immediately focused the Committee on the federal grants-in-aid recommendation by asking the group, “Are you ready to accept the proposition set forth in [pages] 19 and 20 concerning [withholding federal grants-in-aid from segregated schools]?” Immediately, Tilly referred back to that sentence from above about “the added costs of maintaining a pattern of segregation,” stating “There is a taunt in that sentence that will irritate, and I know what the answer of the South will be – ‘We won’t accept it. We would rather be ignorant.’” She continued,

I know folks in the South who have been working so hard to get the South to accept this [federal grants-in-aid] and have had this thrown at us so long. It will mean the Government will take charge of our students and we will have Negroes and whites together in schools…. In the past two years we have got our Southern congressmen almost 100 percent back of this. That

---

66 Ibid., pp. 861-862.
67 Ibid., p. 890.
68 Ibid.
is the thing they have been afraid of all the time. If this comes out as it is [not], I do not believe it will be possible for us to get that Federal Aid to Education Bill through next year because there is something very irritating about that sentence.69

Again, Tilly raised the issue of the Federal Aid to Education bill. Sadie Alexander, seemingly running out of patience with Tilly, suggested curtly, “Very well. We will take out “fair.” Morris Ernst subsequently offered, “Bob, in answer to Mrs. Tilly, you could certainly cut out the words ‘raises the fair question,’ and say ‘raises the question’ or even tone it down.” To which Tilly responded, zeroing in on education as the critical issue for the white South:

I don’t believe we are going to get the South to accept any funds on a non-segregated basis, and I think this report is going to have to temper itself so it can understand that and lead up to it. Dr. Graham knows more than I do about this problem, but this is the one sore spot. I think you could get something through for the elimination of segregation in any other area more easily than you could in education.70

To which Alexander retorted, “Which is the basis of all segregation.”71 Alexander was the one PCCR member who was, during the tenure of the Committee, flagrantly discriminated against because of her race, due to Washington D.C.’s segregation laws. She was almost refused service in a restaurant when lunching with other Committee members, including Charles E. Wilson. She was also refused service at a Milk Bar in the Washington, D.C. airport due to her race, for which she later sued the concession company.72 Robert Carr, who had to arrange lodging for all Committee members when they convened in the nation’s capital, had to use “tactful diplomatic negotiations” so that all PCCR members, including the two African Americans, could stay at the Statler Hotel.73

69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid, p. 891.
72 For a description of the event in which she was almost refused service at lunch in Washington, D.C., see Juhnke, “Creating a New Charter of Freedom,” p. 82. For a reference to the discrimination at the Milk Bar and subsequent civil lawsuit Alexander filed in protest, see letter from Sadie T. M. Alexander to Dr. Frank P. Graham, December 29, 1948, Folder 2034 in the Graham Papers.
As she had attempted in Hanover, Tilly once again tried to convince her fellow Committee members that with federal aid, the quality of education across the South would be elevated and segregation would be eliminated far more quickly over time than without the aid. After a few more recommendations from other Committee members who offered to appease Tilly, Jim Carey interjected an argument against Tilly’s and in opposition to those who wanted to appease her:

> We are setting up the standards in democracy, as I see it. I don’t believe this will answer the problem, nor do I have any ideas that people who believe in segregation are going in any way to be appeased by the striking of a word in a report of this nature. I think there is a struggle going on, not only in this country but throughout the world, and we are not just going to join sides. We are going to decide whether or not we will take issue with the abuses, the use of Democratic institutions to deny people freedom of access to opportunity.

> We are not asking for an awful lot. I don’t know why we should monkey with the words. We ought to justify it as best we can in our words, but I don’t see any reason to struggle over the appeasement of a situation or to in any way get into the field of that if we word this a certain way, people will stop believing in segregation and go ahead and adopt some different course.

Tilly’s response to Carey echoed that of so many southern liberals and human relations activists who endorsed slower yet lasting change while trying to avoid reprisal from a potentially violent opposition. Those who debated Tilly on this point perceived her slower approach as one that catered to those against change versus those who would have benefited from the change. She therefore once again attempted to explain and defend her position:

> I think you are missing the point. The South is making progress rather fast, but we are going to highlight some things here that will bring that progress it is making out in the open more than the foes of the progress have seen before, and I believe it is going to retard it. I believe you will be more conscious of the strides we

---

74 Transcription from PCCR Meeting, September 12-13, 1947, p. 892, Nash Papers.
75 Ibid.
have made and the forces that are pulling it back will where it is highlighted and shown up in this way – I believe we will have trouble. 77

Carey then, defending his position, offered:

I might say that is the accusation that is directed against anyone that agitates the question, and definitely we are in a field of agitation on this issue.

However, as to whether or not it retards it, I don’t think it would help in meeting the problem that we are confronted with if we join forces with the opposition. 78

Tilly retorted, harkening back to her own activist roots in the Women’s Division of the Methodist Church:

I am not asking that we join forces on it. I think we have to be careful of the way it is approached. There has to be an understanding. The South has the largest minority group and has the biggest problem, and it is hard for anyone who doesn’t live in the South to really understand the heart throbs and heartaches on both sides. 79

To which Roosevelt added compassionately, “And those in the middle like yourself.”

At this point, Frank Graham joined the discussion to explain his position,

I have talked continuously in schools for about twenty years, and in my talks I have taken the position over twenty years – in answer to direct questions – that there was not to be Federal control of education in the States. I said in the bill we were proposing – in that bill it was expressly provided that there was not to be Federal control. That is the position I have taken, beginning twenty years ago. 80

77 Transcription from PCCR Meeting, September 12-13, 1947, p. 892, Nash Papers.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., p. 893.
80 Ibid.
Graham had also delivered a lengthy radio address in 1939 about federal aid in education, advocating that the federal government distribute funds equitably to both races and democratically among the states.  

Both Tilly and Graham understood the need for improved education in the South. Education had been a major concern not only for them and other southern liberals, but also became an important issue for the federal government during the Depression. This was because the South was already lagging behind the rest of the nation in education and the RECS very adeptly made that point in 1938. Federal aid was the key to improving the South’s overall education and, thus its prospects for future prosperity, and putting conditions on the funding meant that the South would refuse it. Graham, who served on Roosevelt’s Advisory Committee on Education in the 1930s, had spent several years trying to convince fellow southerners to accept federal grants in aid yet, this “long, tormented legislative history” labored on because the white South wanted the funding with no restrictions. It had already killed a version of the bill four years earlier after Republicans and northern senators “attached a rider” to the 1943 version of the bill which provided for no aid to segregated schools.

After Graham explained his position, Roosevelt then asked him directly if he believed that the South would end segregation in the schools more quickly if there were no restrictions placed on federal grants-in-aid. Graham responded without hesitation, “I think the South will work it out more quickly, yes.” However, when Roosevelt deferred to them, describing Graham

---

81 Transcript of Radio Address, “Town Hall of the Air,” p. 4, broadcast March 30, 1939, Folder 855 in the Graham Papers. This was a debate with Senator Josiah Bailey. In his address, Graham called for equality in education and stated “the federal government is the only agency which can redress this economic and educational imbalance.”


83 Ibid., pp. 193-195.
and Tilly as the Committee’s “experts” in this topic, Graham conceded “I can’t give you any assurance.”

After additional exchanges, Alexander again offered her opinion, this time questioning the logic behind Graham’s and Tilly’s stance on the matter. “How can a Committee representing America, sent out to find how we can improve civil rights, recommend that we shall have segregation in education?” Roosevelt extended Alexander’s argument: “Or not take a position on it? If you carry Mrs. Tilly’s argument logically to its conclusion, we should not aggravate the southern congressmen and just overlook the question.” Tilly quickly defended herself by stating that she was not asking anyone to “overlook the question…. I wish I knew the answer…. I am trying to find a way to get the South submissive to it. You might not be willing to spend the tax money, but that is not the answer. The South would rather be ignorant.” Tilly then looked to fellow committee member Channing Tobias for support by asking, “Don’t you think that would be the answer, Doctor Tobias?” Although Tobias began with an affirmative response to Tilly, he then launched into a lengthy diatribe recalling a meeting he had recently had with a friend of his, a white college professor in the South who questioned, “how we are ever going to find our way out of this thing [segregation] as long as our section, which is the poorest section of the country, adheres to this principle of two sets of institutions [divided] along racial lines when we are unable to support one.” In Tobias’ mind, perhaps the issue boiled down to a matter of pragmatism, and he offered the following thoughts:

…I mean it is a question not only of the ethics of it under the principles that we are discussing now, but it is a very practical

---

84 Transcription from PCCR Meeting, September 12-13, 1947, p. 893, Nash Papers.
85 Ibid., pp. 893-894.
86 Ibid., p. 894.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid, pp. 894-895.
question of how much progress can be made under those conditions.

Now, I want to say this: that I realize, and I think I said it once before in one of our meetings, just the attitude that will be taken by Congressmen, the possible advantage that will be taken of this in order to repudiate all the work of the Committee, but I feel we have come to a time in the history of our nation and in the history of the world when we have got to say what is really in our hearts on this question of segregation and be willing to take what comes.

I think it ought to be worded as carefully as it can be worded, but I think we ought to say it. Segregation is injurious, as Lillian Smith brought out, possibly more injurious to the white child than it is to the Negro child because it brings that child up with a feeling of arrogance and group pride as he realizes that he occupies a different and preferred position.

I think if there is any way to approach it from the point of view of the best interests of the South and the best interests of the nation, than that is the way to approach it; but I do not feel that in a report of this kind we can evade that issue. I think it has got to be faced.  

Although Tobias agreed initially with Tilly, he perceived the PCCR’s job as something different than anything that had come before. Therefore, he believed the PCCR had an obligation and a unique opportunity to act as no other group which had preceded it to solve similar issues.

The debate continued and Tilly stuck by her original opinion when she stated, “If we had better education, even on a segregated basis as now, we would come nearer getting to the point of non-segregated schools,” to which Graham agreed immediately. But Carey perceived the argument as being about education, whereas he interpreted Tilly and Graham arguing over segregation versus non-segregation. Tilly confirmed Carey’s point of view by explaining that for

---

91 Transcription from PCCR Meeting, September 12-13, 1947, p. 898, Nash Papers.
white southerners, the issue was segregation versus non-segregation. Tilly and Graham were not alone in their views of this issue. When Guy B. Johnson, director of the Southern Regional Council (SRC), had addressed the PCCR at an earlier hearing, he predicted erroneously, that “[T]he ultimate disposition of the segregation issue will not take place in our generation.” This leader of the SRC, an organization whose membership included the ranks of southern liberals that led the slow yet deliberate interracial movement in the South, could not foresee and did not advise an abrupt ending of segregation in the foreseeable future.

As the debate continued, most members of this Committee, the majority of whom were not southerners and two of whom were African Americans, believed that the position Tilly and Graham took was indefensible and counter to the PCCR’s mission. Morris Ernst’s verbalized his frustration with sarcasm:

The position seems to have simplified itself in my mind. We can say what we say here or we can say we deplore segregation – period, and say we are bankrupt as to any idea of any sanction and the quickest way to abolish segregation is for the Government to do nothing about it and that life will take care of it. I am not ready to say that.

Jim Carey was more direct:

…I think this is not just a question of asking the people of the South to continue their patterns until they decide to change them, but it is asking other people to pay in part the price for the prejudices of the people in the South….

I don’t think we can ignore the issue of segregation, so it [the Report] has to say something; but, certainly, I would prefer to strike it out or destroy the report rather than say we are going to assist in justifying on the basis of expediency any program of segregation in the field of education.

---

92 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
With respect to federal grants-in-aid, Tilly stated flatly to Carey and the Committee that the South would “not accept it on a non-segregated basis…. It is one of the most serious things connected with this report.” An exasperated Carey shot back, “I think it is time to set up the challenge with those people.” This exchange escalated emotions between Carey and Tilly because Carey referred to white southerners as “those people.” Tilly accused Carey of characterizing southerners as people separate from the rest of the nation. Carey, trying to understand where Tilly was coming from, conceded that he did not accept that the entire South was represented by the white supremacist South. He asked Tilly if she was referring to “the Rankins,” meaning those who shared the same bigoted and prejudiced views as Congressman John E. Rankin from Mississippi, who was infamous for the race-baiting and anti-Semitic viewpoints that he made on the House floor. Tilly stated that the Rankins were “opposed to Federal aid to education,” to which Carey replied, “They are opposed to education.” At that point Graham defended Tilly, stating, “Don’t identify Mrs. Tilly with the Rankins.” Carey explained that he was merely trying to point out that those who believed and acted like John Rankin “were not proper representatives of the people of the South.” Roosevelt reminded Carey that even southerners who were not so rabidly racist as Rankin would still not support “non-segregated Federal aid to education…. And he then offered that even if the majority of southern Congressmen do not support it, they still don’t represent the majority of people in the South.” What Carey and others like him on the Committee were arguing was that the southern liberal approach may have worked by slowly chipping away at the bedrock of white supremacy, but it still accepted discrimination and

---

96 Ibid. p. 899.
97 Ibid., pp. 899-900. The Cocking Affair was a telling precedent illuminating the extreme reaction of Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge to an alleged suggestion to integrate a school near Athens, Georgia by a University of Georgia professor, Walter Cocking. For more information, see “Cocking Affair” New Georgia Encyclopedia, Retrieved January 22, 2012: http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-594.
segregation. To allow the slow pace of change to continue in the South as it had for the past several decades would, to these impatient Committee members, render the PCCR as ineffectual, thereby squandering the unique opportunity presented to them. Therefore, to them, these options were unacceptable.

Despite these objections, Tilly remained firm in her conviction that the matter of segregation in schools would galvanize a larger resistance to social change and she stated flatly, “I am afraid they do [represent the majority] when it comes to this segregation in schools, don’t you, Dr. Graham?” Before Graham could respond, Ernst suggested that the group take a vote on the matter to see where the votes would lie at that point, so he made a motion to approve sanctions in federal grants-in-aid. Roosevelt seconded the motion. Graham, however, needed more clarification on the topic before he was ready to cast his vote and voiced the following concern:

There is a question I don’t believe you have taken account of, Jim. I get the full force of everything you say, but I was on the President’s Committee to draw up the bill [Federal Aid to Education], and we faced this question of Federal control of the schools in the states, and it was written in the preamble of the bill that there should be no Federal control of the States with regard to education.99

Charles Luckman agreed that this point should be discussed because he believed it could “change[s] the import of this considerably.” Further debate ensued after Graham confirmed that in “every bill that has ever been presented” there would be no federal control of education, and further that he “would interpret withholding of federal funds from a state in order to compel non-segregation as a federal control.” Therefore, even though the sanctions would be a “negative control,” they would still imply federal control. Again, Ernst asked for a show of hands on the matter but, before anyone voted, John Dickey stated that he still would not vote for the recommendation because he, like Tilly, believed the best and surest way to end segregation was

99 Ibid., pp. 900-901.
through better education. Dickey firmly believed that imposing sanctions would only make matters worse. Jim Carey then offered that, at the very least, the Committee had to take a forthright position to set a higher standard for all Americans, and leave any compromising over this issue to the lawmakers. Nevertheless, Carey considered Tilly and Graham to be “the two most important people on this particular issue.”

Sadie Alexander again took up the issue with a pointed question to Tilly, asking Tilly how the world would react to “a report in which we recommended that the South maintain segregated schools …?” Graham responded defensively, “You are not suggesting we recommend segregated schools?” To which Alexander replied that she was not but that supporting the segregated system would essentially be the same thing. Graham further explained that the South was against federal aid if it came with conditions, because then it violated the concept of states’ rights. Graham also corrected those who intimated that the South was against education by stating that “it might surprise you to know that the southern people pay more in proportion [for education] than any people in the world…. They go deeper into their pockets for public schools than any other people in the world; so it isn’t a question of being against education.”

2.6 A Gracious Out

After further debate, it became absolutely clear that the Committee could not agree on this matter, and Carr concurring with Carey, declared “the Committee has to take a stand on the level of principle and let the compromising occur at the political level, if need be.” However, Carr also expressed concern about Tilly and Graham, acknowledging that “this matter becomes

---

100 Ibid., pp. 901-903.
101 Ibid., p. 904.
102 Ibid., p. 904-905.
personal” for them. Then, addressing directly Tilly and Graham, he admitted “I am a little worried about what you are going to do. We don’t want to destroy your effectiveness as workers in the South. If you sign it [the report], what will it mean?” Graham assured the group that he had “signed a good many statements against federal control of education, which I interpret this to be.” To which Carr asked pointedly, “You mean you could dissent” on that ground? Graham agreed.103

The PCCR members continued the debate. For Graham, the argument was clear - he was against any federal control when it came to education. For Tilly, the matter became a struggle over the tactical approach - forced desegregation versus a strategic goal of eventual, voluntary, and sustained desegregation. In order to convince her colleagues, she offered another example in which African American and white students were visiting each other and having speakers of the opposite race in the classroom. Admittedly, this was all being done quietly, allowing the students and speakers to get to know each other in a school setting, interacting as students rather than as blacks and whites. Tilly claimed that progress was being made in this organic and subtle effort. Carey then concurred with Carr, restating that “we have a difficult situation on the matter of principle.” He also agreed with Tilly that if the report came out against segregation and for sanctions, then the report would not “make your task or Dr. Graham’s task any easier in the South….” Graham interrupted Carey insisting that he “wouldn’t ask anybody here to stultify himself or compromise his conscience in order to make our problem easier…. I think everybody here ought to vote according to his conscience.”104

Those Committee members who attempted to salvage a compromise from this tangled debate - Carr, Luckman, Ernst, and Roosevelt - agreed that it was important to find a way to get

103 Ibid., p. 904.
104 Ibid., pp. 906-907.
the point across in the report without impeding Tilly’s and Graham’s progress in the South. The discussion at this point turned to drafting some sort of statement in the report that repudiated discrimination and segregation and did not suggest sanctions immediately, but rather recommended an interval to ending federal grants-in-aid over time. Ernst requested that the Committee take a straw vote on the motion that he had made much earlier in the evening. A majority of seven members voted for the motion and it carried. Not all members voted, so it is not clear who officially disagreed with the motion. Tilly attempted to speak for those who did not vote, stating that “We are not against it; yet couldn’t vote for it,” thus reaffirming the delicate position that she and Graham found themselves in with respect to this issue. Ernst suggested that the report include some sort of statement for those such as Graham and Tilly who did not vote for it, in order to save them from trouble in the South and to be clear that the decision was not unanimous. Graham suggested that those who were in the minority “append a statement of our position.” Roosevelt went a step further, suggesting that they issue a statement with their names on it. Tilly disagreed, stating that she would not be in favor of issuing such a statement and declaring, “If my name goes on the report, I will stand by it.”

Several members agreed that a statement of dissent should be included, and they, (Ernst, Luckman, Shiskin, and Graham), coached by executive director Carr, discussed what that statement should include. The group concluded that the best thing to do would be to “note there was a dissent” and allow Tilly and Graham to decide what the actual language of the dissent would be. Still, the argument was not over. Tilly warned that the dissent “saves us, but it doesn’t save the report.” To which Ernst retorted, “I don’t want to save the report at the cost of not being able

---

105 Ibid., pp. 907, 909-910.
106 Ibid., p. 910, Box 195.
to live with myself.” Carey joined in, claiming that if the Committee were not unanimous on this critical issue, it would undermine the report and “destroys the purpose of it.”

Despite Truman’s desire and the hope of several Committee members that the PCCR’s recommendations would be unanimous, on this matter the Committee could not agree. After the heated and lengthy debates on this topic, it was clear that, once again, a slim majority of the members wanted to go forth with a strong anti-segregation position that included sanctioning federal grants-in-aid to segregated schools, and Tilly and Graham, along with a few others, did not. Seeing no way around this impasse, Tilly and Graham finally agreed to a suggestion in which they would be able to write a minority dissent about this recommendation but still sign their names to the Committee’s report. Charles Luckman described this dissent as “a gracious out.”

The two factions within the Committee that argued at length over this topic held very different viewpoints on how to approach change. By the end of the 1940s, a new theory about the causes and cures of racism had emerged from the work of Theodor Adorno and his colleagues, sociologists who argued that racism was completely irrational, and those who were racist could not shed their racism through educational means. If there was no hope for changing the hearts of people, then there was no reason to wait for people to change, and therefore the government should force legal change. Despite the fact that Adorno and his colleagues would not publish their findings until 1950, many liberals had already been influenced by Myrdal and were already

---

107 Ibid., pp. 911-912.
moving in the direction of having civil rights advances forced, without stopping to consider the possible fallout, and this was demonstrated in the attitudes of the several PCCR members. Tilly and Graham were not committed to legal changes to force desegregation or other changes in southern society, but most of the northerners on the PCCR were in favor of utilizing those measures.

Graham wrote the dissent language that was included in the report but did not identify either himself or Tilly as dissenters. Having their names associated with the dissent would undoubtedly weaken the report in the eyes of white southern reactionaries and also white southern liberals. If it were known that the two white southerners on the Committee were the ones who did not agree with the proposal regarding federal aid to education, then their actions might lend support to those groups who would not support it either and give them another reason to dismiss the report altogether. Graham wrote:

A minority of the Committee favors the elimination of segregation as an ultimate goal but opposes the imposition of a federal sanction. It believes that federal aid to the states for education, health, research and other public benefits should be granted, provided that the states do not discriminate in the distribution of the funds. It dissents, however, from the majority’s recommendation that the abolition of segregation be made a requirement, until the people of the states involved have themselves abolished the provisions in their state constitution and laws which now require segregation. Some members are against the non-segregation requirement in grants on the ground that it represents federal control over education. They feel, moreover, that the best way to ultimately end segregation is to raise the educational level of the people in the states affected; and to inculcate both the teachings of religion regarding human brotherhood and the ideals of our democracy regarding freedom and equality as a more solid basis for genuine and lasting acceptance by the people of the states.  

The language in the dissent only addresses the differences in the methods raised by committee members about how to end segregated education; it did not convey the emotions of the objections voiced in the meetings. Graham phrased the dissent carefully, to inform the audience of the facts and also so as not to harm the report itself.

Two weeks after the meeting in Washington, D.C., Sadie Alexander wrote Charles Wilson complimenting the Committee’s handling of the anti-segregation and federal grants in aid issue. She compared their difficult task with that of the founding fathers, who had to reach compromise when writing the contents of the Constitution.

In reading the current issue of the *Benjamin Franklin Institute News*, I came across a letter written by that distinguished world citizen…on June 9, 1788.

Please note paragraph three of Franklin’s letter. Does this not prophetically express the cause for any differences of opinion of members of our Committee? If men with the wisdom of our Constitution fathers were confronted with the necessity of compromise how could we weaker mortals hope for complete unanimity of expression in a study so complicated as Civil Rights in the confused and chaotic world of the year 1947?

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to all members of the Committee and to Mr. Carr, that each of us may find strength in having agreed to ‘some unreasonable things, that reasonable ones of more consequence may be obtained.’

2.7 Southern Traitors and Dupes

Within days of the report’s publication, newspapers across the South criticized the report and bashed Tilly and Graham. On November 1, 1947, two days after publication, Jackson Mississippi’s *Clarion Ledger*, an ultra-conservative paper, ran an article whose headline conveyed a sense of urgency because Mississippi’s vacationing governor, Fielding Wright, had cut short his

---

113 From Sadie Alexander to Charles E. Wilson, September 23, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers. In this letter, Alexander quotes Benjamin Franklin from a letter he wrote on June 9, 1788.
vacation because of the PCCR’s report: “Wright Takes Issue With ‘Racial’ Report: Returns to Capitol From Vacation Trip.” The article described the PCCR as “the so-called Truman committee on civil rights, which has recommended, among other things, the end of segregation of races.” In this piece, Wright’s ire was evident when he was quoted that his opinion on ending segregation “if fully expressed might be so fiery as to be unprintable.” Wright was agreeing with Mississippi’s acting governor, Oscar Wolfe, who had been filling in for him while Wright was on vacation. Wolfe had issued an earlier statement against the PCCR’s report – singling out Til-ly and Graham without naming them:

This so-called Civil Rights Committee is supposed to have two Southern members, but their approval of this recommendation discloses that they are not nurtured in Southern ideals or in true American ideals. Rather, it reveals them either as traitors or as dupes to the destruction of the South and to the United States.

All forms of human relationships and contacts cannot be regulated by law. History allows that where any nation has not practiced segregation of races, but allowed miscegenation and amalgamation of races, this custom has always resulted in the destruction of the nation that permitted this crime against nature.

We of the South know this, and ask the aid of all decent white people of this country to help stem this concerted effort on the part of misguided people to foster a scheme advocated by outside interferers and meddlers to destroy this nation.

The South stands for segregation and will continue to practice it regardless.

“Aimed At the South” was the title of Savannah Morning News’ editorial. Despite the broad scope of TSTR, this particular southern newspaper editor read the report as a castigation of the Jim Crow South and therefore blasted the Committee and its report on several counts, accus-

---


115 Ibid.
ing them of being “brain-trusters of the Roosevelt-Truman camp.” The PCCR’s recommendations were so egregious, according to this author, that it prompted him to compare it to another painful episode of southern history, Radical Reconstruction and the legislation Congress enacted during that time. This evocation of Reconstruction might have been construed as a threat of pending violence:

The report, almost from beginning to end, would disrupt the established economic and social traditions and customs of the South, especially in connection with race relationships, to an extent as great if not greater than the famed proposed force bills aimed at the South during Reconstruction Days.

The editor also expressed displeasure with the two white southern Committee members, Graham and Tilly, when he wrote, “

[It is no credit to this region, moreover that among the fifteen members of the committee are Dr. Frank P. Graham, president of the University of North Carolina and Mrs. M.E. Tilly of Atlanta, an official of the Women’s Society of Christian Service of the Methodist Church.]

In Alabama, The Huntsville Times also reported on Truman’s Committee and its recommendations at great length. Part of this article singled out the Committee’s two southern members; no other Committee members were named. As if almost blaming Graham and Tilly, the article, directly after their mention, stated that “Much of the report deals with the South, and with

---

117 Ibid. For more information about the use of Reconstruction rhetoric see for example, Pete Daniels, Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 36. Daniels argues that the use of Reconstruction references was an “implied threat of violence.”
118 “Aimed At The South”
the Negroes of America. But the Committee said the other regions also have their ‘interferences’ with the rights of individuals.”

Within two weeks of the PCCR’s report publication, an article written by Thurman Sensing, Director of Research of the Southern States Industrial Council in Nashville, Tennessee also bashed the report and its Committee members. He dismissed Tilly and Graham as disingenuous southerners and claimed that African Americans would suffer if desegregation were forced:

Of one thing, however, we can be quite certain—and that is, that the report is aimed rather directly at the South….Why should a committee of fifteen members take it upon themselves to lay down certain rules and regulations that would revise the customs and practices and traditions of a region containing 40 million people? It should be noted, too, that this committee, which apparently takes it upon itself to represent one-third of the nation, contains only two members from the South – a region comprising one-third of the nation’s population. Moreover, the most charitable thing that can be said about these two members is that they are not too highly regarded by the people they are supposed to represent.

Since thirteen members of the committee are from without the South, since the two members from the South do not represent Southern thought, and since the recommendations of the committee are unquestionably directed at the South, it is not too difficult to answer the question as to why this is so…. They therefore attempt to stir up strife and tension in the region they can not control…they are perhaps most dangerous in their effort to violate all the traditions and principles of the South with reference to racial segregation…. This committee does not understand – and neither do a great many people outside the South seem to understand – that segregation is not discrimination…. Segregation is best for both races – and thinking people of both races realize it. It has worked in the South, which region still contains three-fourths of the nation’s Negro population – and we are only being realistic when we realize that it would work no other way in the South. Those who actually understand the relationship between the races know that nothing would be worse for the Negro race than enforced abolishment of segregation.

120 “Wipe Out Race Barriers Now Group Advises,” ADAH.
Despite Tilly’s pleas to make the report less harsh on the South, and the minor, mostly cosmetic changes that the PCCR’s staff made in concession, the southern press discarded these lame attempts and called it as they saw it – an unmitigated attack on the traditions upheld by the white South. Up until the time of her service on the PCCR, Tilly’s work in southern race relations was largely within the progressive circles of the Women’s Division of the Methodist Church and the anti-lynching movement, but her service on the PCCR now illuminated her as a civil rights agitator to those who wanted the social status quo unchanged. This newfound celebrity status was not always a positive experience for Tilly. One letter to the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* targeted Tilly and suggested that she mind her own business and start civil rights improvements within her own neighborhood.122 Franklin Acker of the South Carolina paper *The Independent*, described Tilly as one of two southerners on the PCCR who was nothing more than a “parasite who, while living upon the funds furnished by the Methodist church, has rendered much of her service to the cause of Socialism and Communism.”123 Disparaging race relations activists by labeling them socialists or communists was not a new phenomenon, but one that would increase as the civil rights movement accelerated.124

B.B. Chandler, publisher of the *Mobile Press Register*, personally sent Tilly an article from that paper entitled, “Southern Leaders Point out Fallacies in Committee Report on Civil Rights.” The article criticized the PCCR’s work, arguing that “a study of the report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights shows that the Committee is ignorant of the South and prejudiced against it. The Committee’s lack of common sense and utter ignorance of the difficult

---

123 Franklin Acker, “Around the Town,” *The Independent*, November 11, 1947, Box 2, Folder 5, Dorothy Rogers Tilly Papers, 1868-1970, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (hereinafter Tilly Papers, Emory University).
problems faced by the South is evident in its silly recommendation that all racial segregation be abolished immediately."

Graham was a public figure known nationally as a southern liberal. The letters he received from southerners were mainly critical of his role or, at best, questioned his role. In several of the letters, the matter of the dissent arose from those who were curious if Graham had dissented on the issue of withholding federal funds from segregated schools. Furthermore, because no one signed the dissent registered in TSTR, some questioned Graham’s stance on segregation:

As a native southerner and Ex-President of the Oklahoma Division United Daughters of the Confederacy I would like to know where you were born and reared and how you voted on the race segregation question, as a member of Pres. Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights. Of course, I believe negroes and whites were created separate races and should so remain. I believe we should give the races equal opportunity but never social equality. Neither do I believe that the Federal Gov’t should interfere with States’ Rights. I am a Democrat and firmly believe in the sovereign rights of our States. I would appreciate your views on segregation and States’ Rights. Thanking you for an early response.

Graham also received several letters from angry North Carolinians. One from D. A. Hutto asked him to issue a minority report to counter TSTR:

My observation for some years has been that this good STATE of N.C., - - - THE BEST PEOPLE THAT I KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT, has bestowed upon you many of its honors time and time again - - - but I do not believe any of these HONORS were given with the thought that you would STAND OUT against even any, much less ALL of the TRUE AND SACRED things that these same people have held so faithfully to.

AND IT NEARLY KILLS ME TO SEE that YOU HAVE SIGNED A

---

125 “Southern Leaders Point Out Fallacies in Committee Report on Civil Rights,” Box 1, Folder 3, The Mobile Press Register, Tilly Papers, Emory University.
126 From W. J. Crutchfield to Frank Graham, Nov. 8, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers and From Fair (rest of name illegible) to Frank Graham, n.d., Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers.
127 From Mrs. B. E. Chaney to Frank Graham, Oct. 29, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers.
YANKEE report against all of us. IT WOULD SEEM THEREFORE TO ME (Just one of the masses,) but I find many agreeing with me, that this would be a very good time for the people to get wise and wake up and CANCEL THE HONORS, they have so VAINLY BESTOWED UPON YOU. Unless, of course, you should come to your senses and at least make some “MINORITY REPORT,” with some sense to it.\textsuperscript{128}

Another letter illustrated the fear that desegregation in education would lead to social intimacy:

I am surprised at a man in your place, living in the south having anything to do with this petition. Just such a thing as this causes a lot of trouble with the Negroes in this country. I have nothing personally against the negroes, and am ready to protest for the negroes, but I am opposed to a negro coming in my house and sitting down at my table with my family. I am also opposed to my children sitting at a desk with a negro in the school room.\textsuperscript{129}

This author then mentioned what he or she believed to be the inevitable and ultimate conclusion, that those who favored the end of segregation were trying to create a mixed race of blacks and whites. This illogical and unfounded argument was intended to strike fear in order to ensure segregation would not be attempted … “I am opposed to one of my children marrying a negro.”\textsuperscript{130} Mr. O. L. Bonne also wrote Graham, predicting violent consequences and holding Graham accountable for them, “The position you have on this race question if pursued will surely result in discord and blood shed [sic].”\textsuperscript{131}

By the late 1940s, Tilly and Graham were seasoned southern race relations experts and the attacks on them by southern white supremacists were not enough to deter them from continuing in their life’s work. Tilly would remain truthful to her tried-and-true tactics in working with churchwomen of both races in subtle, yet meaningful, areas and would support the nascent Civil

\textsuperscript{128} From D. A. Hutto to Frank Graham, November 1, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers.
\textsuperscript{129} From J.S. Davis to Frank Graham, November 2, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} From O. L. Bonne to Frank Graham, November 4, 1947, Folder 2033 in the Graham Papers.
Rights movement as it gained momentum over the next two decades. Graham, on the other hand, moved his activism further into the political realm, when he assumed one of North Carolina’s United States Senate seats after Senator James Broughton unexpectedly died in 1949. 

White racists ensured, however, that Graham would never be elected in his own right. After this brief stint in politics, Graham delved heavily into human rights work with the United Nations for the remainder of his career.\textsuperscript{132}

Truman’s Civil Rights Message to Congress in February, 1948, fueled the fire against \textit{TSTR} and stirred up animosity against Tilly and Graham all over again. Less than a week after the president delivered his message, in which he mentioned the PCCR and tasked Congress with moving ahead on ten of the PCCR’s recommendations, Tilly and Graham received an anonymous letter postmarked in Tilly’s hometown of Atlanta. The salutation across the top of the letter read, “The Two Southern Residents of the Civil Rights(?) Committee,” indicating that it was intended for both Tilly and Graham. The letter threatened a violent future for the South and held Tilly and Graham directly responsible for their complicity as members of the PCCR.

\begin{quote}
Your recommendations are naught, but by your actions you have precipitated and agitated more assault, more rape and more bloodshed than the South has ever seen. You have prepared more hangmen’s nooses than have ever been prepared – or would have been prepared in the history of the whole Southland. The tremendous increase of rape cases in the South - the wholesale electrocutions and putting to death by the Gas Chamber, are the direct result of the wide publicity of your actions….
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
You cheap publicity seekers and nigger lovers such as Eleanor Roosevelt, President (?) Truman, and others are the direct cause, or will be the direct cause, of more lynchings than have ever, or would have ever occurred. You are ignorant of conditions in the South, and the understanding of the colored race. You are agitating the negro. Their feeble minds and yours, cannot grasp the resulting chaos your recommendations will bring. You
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{132} For more on Frank Graham see Julian M. Pleasants and Augustus M. Burns III, \textit{Frank Porter Graham and the 1950 Senate Race in North Carolina}, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); See also Ashby.
are bringing about insolence, bigotry, as well as assault, rape, murder and a number of outrages.\textsuperscript{133}

The anonymous letter also references the 1946 Monroe, Georgia mass lynchings of four African Americans – one of the heinous post-war race crimes that led Truman to establish the PCCR:

We admit that the murder of 4 negroes in Georgia was a dreadful affair, but the state of affairs was so desperate, something had to be done. By this action, possibly 4 thousand lives were saved.\textsuperscript{134}

The author then denied Tilly and Graham their southern heritage by writing “Leave the South to the Southerners. We have handled the situation for a century and we will continue to do so.”\textsuperscript{135} Earlier in the letter, the author essentially excommunicated Tilly and Graham from being southern because of their association with the PCCR and \textit{TSTR}, pronouncing “You are not worthy to live in the South. The Southern public knows that you are not Southerners. The damage that has been done is irreparable.”\textsuperscript{136} In the mind of this writer, Tilly and Graham could no longer be considered southern because being a southerner meant that one must be white and must also uphold the social custom of segregation. The letter’s author warned Tilly and Graham that there were plenty of others who shared the author’s attitudes.

Who am I? I am the average Southerner. I was born and reared in the South. My Father and grandfather, my mother and my grandmother were Southerners. There are millions just like me.

Ask any Southerner, man or woman, how they feel about this question. We think it is high time that the Southern people assert themselves in words and in deeds. We should and we will have something to say about conditions in the South.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{133} Anonymous letter to “The Two Southern Residents of the Civil Rights(?) Committee,” mailed in Atlanta on February 8, 1948, Box 1, Folder 3, Dorothy Rogers Tilly Papers, Dacus Library, Archives and Special Collections, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, South Carolina, (hereinafter, Tilly Papers, Winthrop University).
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Anonymous letter to “The Two Southern Residents of the Civil Rights(?) Committee.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
Seven years before segregation came under attack after the 1954 and 1955 *Brown* decisions, the threats made by this anonymous author are emblematic of some white southerners’ intense desire not only to maintain the status quo, but they also threatened a violent, mass-based backlash in order to do so.\textsuperscript{138}

Less than a week after Truman’s February, 1948 speech to Congress, Senator James Eastland criticized Tilly and Graham on the Senate floor, implying that the Committee was stacked against the segregationists, when he said “the southern people who were to be so vitally effected by the President’s so-called Civil Rights Committee were denied representation on the Committee, except for two persons who had already by former action committed themselves to the course which they were expected to pursue.”\textsuperscript{139}

Later that month, on February 19\textsuperscript{th}, Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia made the introductory speech at the Virginia Jefferson Day Dinner, honoring Senator Clyde Hoey, of North Carolina. In this speech he, too, criticized Truman and the PCCR and its recommendations, especially with respect to the recommendation to withhold federal aid from segregated schools. Byrd’s threat confirmed Tilly predictions… that the South would rather be ignorant than be forced into ending segregation by the federal government.

> If such coercion becomes a reality, by passage of the legislation as proposed, I pray god that Virginia will lead the southern states as renouncing for all time, every dollar of Federal aid. We must not sell our right of self-government for a mess of Federal pottage…. But let me interject, independent of this outrageous proposal, the sooner Federal grants are abolished, the better.”\textsuperscript{140}


\textsuperscript{139} 80 Cong. Rec. p. 1196 (Statement of Senator Eastland, Daily ed., February 9, 1948), Georgia State University Law Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

\textsuperscript{140} Speech by H. Byrd at Virginia Jefferson Day Dinner, February 19, 1948, Folder 2033 in the Graham Papers.
Although she had worked for many years against hate groups, Tilly had never been overtly targeted by them. This changed after her service on the PCCR. In 1948 she made an appearance at an anti-mask hearing in which she and other southern churchwomen had petitioned southern state legislators to pass legislation outlawing the wearing of masks in public. After this hearing, she was tripped and thrown to the floor by Ku Klux Klan members as she was exiting the meeting.\footnote{Helena Huntingdon Smith, “Mrs. Tilly’s Crusade,” \textit{Collier’s}, December 30, 1950, p. 67, Box 2, Folder 4, Tilly Papers, Emory University.} She received at least one bomb threat and several harassing phone calls to her home in Atlanta. Undaunted, Tilly’s response was to play a recording of “The Lord’s Prayer” into the telephone.\footnote{Ruth A. Collins, “We Are The Inheritors,” \textit{Response: United Methodist Women}, July – August, 1971, p. 31, Box 2, Folder 4, Tilly Papers, Emory University; Riehm, p. 39.}

### 2.8 Conclusion

Graham and Tilly did not agree with segregation, in fact they were morally opposed to it. They dissented because they were concerned about the southern reaction from reactionaries, moderates and liberals alike, to the Committee’s recommendation to withhold federal money from segregated school systems in order to force desegregation. All members of the Committee realized that the report would be read by white southern segregationists. Committee members in favor of the recommendation to sanction federal grants-in-aid essentially redefined the race issue as a white problem because they demanded immediate change regardless of what southern white supremacists thought about it. Tilly and Graham – the two white southerners on the Committee feared such unyielding recommendations would unravel social progress and instigate violence. They also were concerned about being able to continue their work in the South in the wake of the report’s publication. For Tilly it was about being able to work quietly, making gains that would
endure - converting white racist attitudes individually, organically, which would overtime lead to voluntary acceptance of integration. Tilly admitted, later in her life, that the experience on the PCCR was her “most difficult task.” For Graham, it was about his ability to continue his work in public education in ensuring that the South got its fair share of funding because it desperately needed it. He believed accurately that, faced with an ultimatum, the South would sacrifice education for racial segregation.

*TSTR* generated much interest – both positive and negative. Tilly and Graham were seen by other members of the Committee as experts in southern race relations, and even those who disagreed with Tilly’s and Graham’s dissent with respect to federally funding segregated schools still sought their advice. In December 1947, Sadie Alexander wrote Graham asking for his help with ongoing activities related to the Committee’s work.

It would appear, however that our work on the committee was but the beginning of a long road each one of us will have to trod if we expect to see the recommendations become a reality rather than an addition to governmental archives.

I have had a request from many groups asking me to speak. I am particularly anxious to accept one in Richmond, Virginia, under the auspices of my college sorority, Delta Sigma Theta. These young ladies will write you, giving the names of the other organizations in the City of Richmond which are joining with them in planning a public meeting at which they have asked me to attend and asked me to request you to attend. I would not want to come South to discuss the report unless you or Mrs. Tilley (sic) accompany me.

Both Tilly and Graham knew that the PCCR’s report with its strong anti-segregation stance and recommendation to withhold federal funds from segregated schools, despite the dissent they appended to the report, would be scrutinized and criticized by segregationists and white.

---

143 Tilly, “Background,” Tilly Papers, Emory University.
144 From Sadie Alexander to Frank Graham, Dec. 3, 1947, Folder 2026 in the Graham Papers. Alexander’s words “long road each one of us will have to trod” is a reference to the hymn, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” written by James Weldon Johnson and his brother, John Rosamond Johnson. The song is known as the “black national anthem.” For more information see http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/features/patc/liftvoice/.
supremacists in the South and also within some southern liberal circles. In meetings, Tilly continuously warned the Committee about this and foreshadowed that the South would not be silent about its unhappiness with the report. During the September 1947 meetings, Tilly admitted that in her conversation earlier that summer with George C. Biggers, editor of the conservative newspaper *Atlanta Journal*, he told her flatly that on the recommendation to withhold funds from segregated schools, “*the Atlanta Journal would itself have to attack the report.*”\(^{145}\) Graham also knew that this report, and whether he dissented on the matter of segregation and education, would be scrutinized by many white southerners. He admitted during the September meeting, “I am going to be asked in meetings, heckled, and so on, ‘How did you vote one way in President Roosevelt’s Committee and another way in President Truman’s Committee?’” Graham was not concerned about it though, and with his dissent on the matter, he could truly say “I voted the same way both times.”\(^{146}\) While many liberal organizations and individuals praised Tilly and Graham, newspapers, organizations, politicians and individuals across the South denounced them as traitors and their actions as treasonous.

The anti-segregation recommendation in the report illuminated the ineffectiveness of the interracial movement and foreshadowed the end of one phase of southern liberalism. Moreover, it represented a narrowing of the type of work already being done in the South by those such as Tilly and Graham. Tilly and Graham would emerge from their experience on the PCCR into a race relations miasma. During this period of flux the interracial movement was becoming obsolete, but the United States government was slow to act on the PCCR’s recommendations, and the African American-led civil rights movement had yet to crystallize. These two activists would

\(^{145}\) Transcription from PCCR Meeting, September 12-13, 1947, pp. 911-912, Nash Papers.

\(^{146}\) Ibid., p. 912.
return to the South and continue their work in human relations, with a focus on this new subset of the human rights movement known as civil rights that they helped to birth.

Tilly would return to the South and for the remainder of her career would continue working in the realm of human rights, hosting interracial meetings with southern churchwomen to help to shift white, racist attitudes in communities across the South, as the civil rights movement both gained momentum and weathered several setbacks in the 1950s and 1960s. Graham returned to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill but by 1949 moved on to fill a Senate seat, where, his role on the PCCR would help cost him an election in his own right, essentially ending Graham’s long tenure of public and political work in southern race relations. He would then move to the larger issue of global human rights in a role with the United Nations.
CHAPTER 3: MRS. TILLY’S MOVEMENT

Laws mean nothing unless the people want to abide by them. The people must have in their hearts the will to treat their fellow man right. Then, and then only, will America really become a free nation for all of its citizens.

Dorothy Tilly, January 1948

3.1 Introduction

Dorothy Tilly admitted many years after her service on the PCCR, that the work on this Committee was her life’s most difficult task. Tilly objected to some of the more radical recommendations put forth in TSTR, and at times her arguments seem to favor no change to the racial status quo, versus endorsing a change that would be resisted and that would likely elicit violence and undo progress made by southern liberals. In some sense, it may have appeared to her PCCR colleagues that she was mollycoddling the southern white supremacists, but she was not. Tilly’s views were not at all supportive of the white supremacist desires to maintain Jim Crow. Furthermore, she was very different from others on the PCCR because her experiences as a white female human relations activist in the South gave her a unique perspective about the South. While her more radical colleagues probably perceived Tilly as dragging her feet on the segregation and education issue because of the fear of a backlash, they themselves could not imagine what massive resistance might be like. Because of her experiences as an anti-lynching activist and, as one who would have been old enough to remember the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and re-

---

1 For the title of this chapter, I borrow a phrase from a letter written by David Nolan, editor of “The New South Student,” which was the periodical published by the Southern Student Organizing Committee. The letter was dated August 10, 1968 and in it Nolan writes, “I have heard many things about “Mrs. Tilly’s Movement” and think it would be very good to run an article on it as part of our series. I was wondering if you would be willing to write the story for us.” Dorothy Rogers Tilly Papers, 1868-1970, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (hereinafter Tilly Papers, Emory University).

surge of the Ku Klux Klan following World War I, Tilly understood that racism was violent and irrational, and she was genuinely fearful of what could happen if segregation suddenly ended.\(^3\) Despite her knowledge of these incidents Tilly herself could not even imagine what massive resistance could be. Additionally, to Tilly some of the recommendations put forth by the PCCR represented a narrowing of the work Tilly was already doing within the field termed by Tilly and her colleagues as “human relations.”

In December 1947, approximately six weeks after the PCCR published its report, Tilly was asked to speak to the Women’s National Press Club about her role on this Committee and about civil rights.\(^4\) In the speech, Tilly covered several issues that included civil rights, the Cold War, the problems of segregation, and what some southern churchwomen were doing to combat racism. She stated unequivocally that “the hope lies in the women” to correct the ills of our society and rid the nation of hate, because “they are freer to work, and their living doesn't depend so much on what they say and what they do.”\(^5\) Although Tilly dissented from the recommendation to sanction federal grants-in-aid to segregated schools in *To Secure These Rights*, she signed the report and supported it. As a former member of Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights, Tilly helped to set a national agenda for civil rights reform. In the post-PCCR world, Tilly and her southern churchwomen continued to be positive catalysts for human rights in the South.

This chapter will briefly examine Tilly’s childhood and young adulthood to reveal the inspirations for her activism. It will then examine the direction that Tilly’s human rights career

---


\(^5\) Dorothy Tilly, Speech, Women’s National Press Club, Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C., 11 December 1947, audio recording, Tilly Papers, Emory University.
took in the post-PCCR world, focusing first on three conferences that Tilly held in the late 1940s. The first was on human rights and the second on civil rights. Then, two years into the post-PCCR world, Tilly reverted back to her interracial movement human relations tactics of quietly bringing churchwomen of both races together, which she did in a third conference, which was not well publicized and innocuously called, “A Workshop of Southern Churchwomen.” Tilly’s goal was to convene women of both races so that they could quietly devise strategies to eradicate prejudice and hate within their communities across the South without provoking opposition. This ecumenical conference, which Tilly named “The Fellowship of the Concerned (FOC)”, became an annual interracial event for many southern churchwomen from 1949 until 1968, when illness forced Tilly’s retirement. The chapter will also compare and contrast the Fellowship of the Concerned with its predecessor, the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, to demonstrate the evolution of churchwomen’s interracial and civil rights activism in the post-war period. The chapter then reveals how Tilly demonstrated support for the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision, despite the position she took in PCCR meetings against abruptly ending segregation in the schools, and how many of her churchwomen followed suit not only in supporting the decision but in keeping their own children in schools during the desegregation crisis that erupted in many southern cities. Lastly, the chapter reveals how churchwomen’s activism, deftly guided by Tilly, tackled the immediate needs of the civil rights movement without ever losing sight of the loftier goal of human rights for all.

### 3.2 Early Inspirations

Tilly was reared in a devout Methodist household and fortified her faith throughout her adult life, often quoting from scripture to inspire her and other white churchwomen to move for-
ward in the quest for humanity despite great odds in the harsh and racist climate of the South. Her earliest influences came from her family, especially her father who was a Methodist minister, and her mother, who was a schoolteacher.\footnote{For more on Tilly’s background see Edith Holbrook Riehm, “Dorothy Tilly and the Fellowship of the Concerned,” in Throwing off the Cloak of Privilege: White Southern Women Activists in the Civil Rights Era, ed. Gail S. Murray (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).} In the late summer of 1894, when Tilly was eleven years old, she traveled alone by train from her hometown of Hampton, Georgia, through Atlanta and then farther up the Southern Railway to Duluth, Georgia to visit her aunt and other members of her extended family. After her visit had ended and young Dorothy had returned home, her aunt wrote to her:

Dollie, darling, everyone in Duluth misses you. By your sweet friendly courtesy you gained the hearts of every one white and black here….  

Now, my dear child this is great encouragement, for you to continue to be kind to all, even to the poor and needy, and your Heavenly Father will bless you in this life, and in the hereafter.\footnote{Tilly’s Aunt to Dorothy “Dollie” Rogers, August 15, 1894, Private papers of Eben Tilly, Durham, North Carolina.}

Even at this young age, Tilly exhibited traits that would eventually guide her life’s work as a humanitarian in the troubled South, for which her aunt recognized and complimented Tilly’s behavior. This type of nurturing foreshadowed the training and encouragement Tilly would receive from other Methodist women in the 1920s and 1930s as Tilly transitioned from an activist to a leader of Christian southern women in the struggle for humanity and justice. In fact, Tilly’s most influential teachers were the female mentors she found in the Woman’s Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. By the 1940s, Tilly herself was recognized as a leader of southern churchwomen and, like those before her, utilized the teachings of Christ, prayer, and interracial meetings to build sustained empathy between members of both races.
Tilly did not need a law passed or a court case argued to decide that segregation was wrong. She came to understand it as morally wrong and disavowed it sometime in the 1930s. Taking her cue from Methodist women who became her mentors during the critical decade of the 1930s, Tilly, in time, became a mentor for other southern churchwomen. Tilly helped shift white racist attitudes in the South through her conferences and throughout the country via her writings in Methodist church circles. Tilly did not quit organizations that continued to practice segregation. For example, she did not leave her church – even though it did not accept African Americans as members until well into the 1960s. Tilly knew from experience that people’s hearts could change, not through force but over time, through trust, faith, love and understanding.

Tilly’s membership in the PCCR in the 1940s crystallized her role as a catalyst for social and political change in the South over the next twenty years. The radical recommendations made by the Committee, coupled with the insistent inputs from Committee members who refused to accept Tilly’s more deliberate tactics to instigate social change in the South, proved to her that the change imposed on the South from the outside, which had started slowly a few decades before, was increasing its pace and would hereafter be relentless. Tilly realized that her role going forward would be to prepare the white South for the ongoing onslaught of change, because she predicted accurately that white racist southerners would defy and retaliate against any effort by the federal government to inflict social change in the South.

3.3 From Human Rights to Civil Rights and Back Again

Tilly’s involvement in the PCCR did not prevent her from organizing and participating in other events in 1947. Inspired by her work on the PCCR, and undoubtedly supportive of the

---

8 For more on Tilly’s disavowal of segregation see Riehm.
Christian ecumenical movement’s duty to help form a new global order in the days following World War II, Tilly organized a regional Conference on Human Rights and World Order in Atlanta. This conference was held on May 8 and 9, 1947 at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Atlanta, Georgia. Tilly chaired the conference under the sponsorship of three organizations, the Georgia Council of Church Women, the Women’s Society of Christian Service – Southeastern Jurisdiction, and the Southern Regional Council. The conference’s purpose was twofold:

- to bring together ‘representative’ individuals of various racial, cultural, and economic groups for the purpose of interpreting ‘Human Rights’ in the world scene today, and adapting them to local, regional and national practices.\(^9\)

A secondary but nonetheless important purpose was

- to undergird the forthcoming report of President Truman’s Civil Rights Committee and to prepare the leaders of women’s organizations of the South to face clearly and understandingly that the denial of human rights to any group anywhere affects the peace and safety of all people everywhere.\(^10\)

Here, Tilly directly associated her work on the PCCR within the larger context of the human rights movement. The interracial conference was deemed a success, with over 200 conference attendees representing 13 states – including Washington, D.C., Oklahoma, and New York. It was an ecumenical conference as well, with various religious organizations represented.\(^11\) Representing the post-World War II progressive coalition at the conference were representatives from Emory University, Scarritt College, Spelman College, Atlanta University, Agnes Scott College, the Teamsters, the American Federation of Labor, Atlanta Urban League, Ameri-


\(^10\) Ibid.

\(^11\) Ibid. A listing of religious denominations represented included: “Methodist, Episcopal, Christian (Disciples), Lutheran, Presbyterian, Jewish, Salvation Army, Baptist, Congregational, Baha’i World Faith, Unitarian-Universalist, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.” B’nai B’rith Women of Atlanta were also included.
can Red Cross, U.S. Dept. of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Georgia School of Technology, League of Women Voters, and the Woman’s Bureau of the Department of Labor.¹²

For the conference’s first day Tilly organized workshops addressing the following topics: “Human Rights and World Order,” “Human Rights Under the Law,” and “Human Rights in Earning a Living.”¹³ These topics echoed the United Nations’ Declaration of Human Rights, which extended beyond civil rights alone. To further bring a realistic, if not harsh, perspective to attendees about the state of the world in the early post-war era, Tilly organized the luncheon for the first day to “be the cereal served to children of war devastated countries.” She solicited donations for it, instructing attendees, “Persons will be privileged to pay any amount they wish for the lunch and it will be sent to overseas relief.”¹⁴ That evening, three keynote speakers addressed the conference attendees. Lillian Schearer of the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Social Security Administration spoke about “Women’s Right to Make a Living.” Turner Smith, Chief of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice addressed the audience speaking of “Our Civil Rights.” While the conference was ostensibly about Human Rights, Tilly included this important session about civil rights, thus demonstrating the inextricable link between the two movements. The final speaker, Richard Fagley of the Federal Council of Churches and a representative from the United Nations, spoke about “Human Rights and World Order.”¹⁵

Tilly reserved the second day for attendees to conclude workshop discussions and then allotted time for them to discuss their findings and develop a program of action.¹⁶ A critical goal

---

¹² Ibid.
¹³ Southern Regional Council, Invitation and Agenda for “A CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND WORLD ORDER,” Reel 3, Frames 171-172, SRC Papers.
¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁵ “REPORT OF CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND WORLD ORDER.”
¹⁶ “A CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND WORLD ORDER.”
of this conference, like so many other initiatives at this time, was to educate Americans “to support the United Nations and its human rights system.” The optimism created by the conference dovetailed with the general optimistic outlook held by many in the postwar period who supported and expected a new world order in which human rights would be a priority. Human rights was not a new initiative for Tilly; however with the United Nations human rights movement well underway, she likely believed the timing was optimal for a conference that highlighted human rights.

Some southern women’s church groups also believed that they held a vested interest in influencing the creation of a new global order, and they asserted themselves in that effort while simultaneously working against lynching and disenfranchisement. Two months prior to Tilly’s Human Rights conference, the Woman’s Society of Christian Service of the North Georgia Conference of The Methodist Church held its annual session in March 1947. During this meeting, the members adopted a resolution in which they denounced lynching and the white primary, calling for “full justice to be given in all our courts to all citizens, regardless of station in life, creed or color…..” The women declared their support for the United Nations and the “concept of ‘One World,’” and they endorsed the “strengthening of the U.N.O. by the early organization of a world police force and by working toward the formation of a world government with limited powers adequate to prevent war.” On the national and global levels the women, conscious of the United States’ role in shaping international affairs, called upon the United States “to accept its full share of responsibility in providing homes for displaced and homeless victims of totalitarian brutality and religious persecution.” But they also disapproved of any “peacetime universal military training by the U.S.,” suggesting that such action “would undermine” the United Nations’

---

disarmament proposal and therefore they claimed it “both unadvisable and useless in this atomic age.” This resolution provided insight into some of the opportunities and tensions that characterized the 1940s as a critical decade in the growing civil rights movement, the nascent Cold War, and the larger effort for human rights. Moreover, the resolution, coupled with Tilly’s Human Rights Conference, demonstrate that many white southern churchwomen expected to continue their human rights activism and exert their influence in shaping local, national, and global communities in the post-war era.

In February 1948, President Truman presented his Civil Rights message to Congress, which consisted of about one-third of the PCCR recommendations. Truman’s speech again drew the ire of many southern senators and congressmen, and once again the PCCR and To Secure These Rights came under attack. Tilly traveled across the United States during 1948, speaking to groups about To Secure These Rights. She also organized another conference placing the focus on civil rights. However, by this time, a concerted and growing reaction against To Secure These Rights and Truman’s Civil Rights program had formed in the South, and some of her speaking engagements about To Secure These Rights drew negative and, in some cases, hostile responses.

Concurrent with Tilly’s organizing efforts of southern churchwomen to push a human rights, and later a civil rights, agenda in the late 1940s, there arose a southern white women’s counter effort led by Mississippi newspaper columnist and avowed segregationist Frances Sillers.

---

19 For more about the shift back to a civil rights focus from the human rights focus, see Normand and Zaidi, p. 166. See also Robert Zangrando, NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).
20 Riehm, pp. 31-32.
Ogden. Ogden, who cultivated her activist training roots in the 1920s with the Daughters of the American Revolution, shifted her activism to be even more conservative in the mid-1940s, when a confluence of events including World War II, Roosevelt’s FEPC, a threatened anti-poll tax law, and the *Smith v. Allright* decision, which knocked down the Texas white primary, spurred Ogden to action. During the war, she began her campaign against the attacks on Jim Crow by encouraging white southern women to use their influence as mothers to strengthen and uphold the custom of segregation. After the PCCR released its report, Ogden specifically attacked *TSTR* because of its recommendations to immediately abolish segregation and to sanction federal grants-in-aid to force desegregated schools. Ogden utilized scare tactics when speaking to white women, warning that integration would “affect you and your children and your children’s children.” Ogden called for “Race segregation,” claiming that it was “self-preservation.” School integration, she warned, would lead to “mongrelization.” In the 1948 presidential election, she supported the States Rights candidates, Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and Fielding Wright of Mississippi. By the early 1950s, Ogden had become so disgusted with the Democratic Party that she organized southern white women in favor of keeping the segregated status quo, and they campaigned for the Republican presidential candidate, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

While the Human Rights Conference in 1947 and the Civil Rights Conference in 1948 were well attended and well organized, both lacked the momentum to catalyze sustained progress in either the human rights or civil rights movements in the South. Tilly recognized the inherent
pitfalls in drawing attention to these movements. In the post-war years, the number of southerners willing to publicly partake in civil rights activity shrank due to the emergence of the Cold War, the rising anti-communist sentiment, the post-war racial violence, and the more forthright goal of integration put forth by the PCCR in the nascent national civil rights movement. Ever the optimist, the undaunted Tilly searched for ways in which she and southern churchwomen could continue improving the South for all southerners – African Americans and whites - without drawing attention to themselves, since Tilly’s early attempts to promote civil rights had been met with strong opposition. In 1949 she drew upon the methods she learned through her mentors in the 1930s - Methodist women - and created an interracial conference which she innocuously named “The Fellowship of the Concerned.” Learning from her conferences in 1947 and 1948, Tilly did not attach a theme to the 1949 conference such as human rights or civil rights and, similar to the Christian Leadership Schools of the 1930s, Tilly invited white and African American churchwomen to this conference.24

Tilly’s work on the Farm Security Administration brought her to Washington, D.C. several times during the war and during one of her visits, Tilly was introduced to Eleanor Roosevelt and the two became friends. Tilly had arranged for the First Lady to attend an interracial conference at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina in 1944. Tilly again called on Roosevelt to help with this 1949 conference. Roosevelt had been a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly and had led the committee that wrote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.25 Roosevelt


agreed and became the keynote speaker at the Conference. About a month before the scheduled date, Tilly, ruminating about the growing anti-civil rights sentiment in the South, wrote to Roosevelt admitting "I think I told you that our South seems to be more or less willing to accept the Universal Bill of Rights but has a closed mind about our civil rights in the South."  

Despite Tilly’s worries, two thousand people came to hear the former First Lady speak about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the Wesley Memorial Church in Atlanta. Although there were many supporters of Roosevelt in attendance, she had many enemies in the South, and outside the church many of her detractors also showed up and “jeered” at the First Lady as she came through the crowd to enter the church. 

During the conference itself, Tilly reconstituted existing networks of activist churchwomen (many of whom were former members of the defunct ASWPL) into a new organization that she called the Fellowship of the Concerned (FOC). The FOC, an umbrella coalition, was loosely composed of southern churchwomen who were leaders in their various religious organizations, including United Church Women, the Women's Christian Missionary Service of the Methodist Church, and other groups who wanted to improve race relations in the South. 

With commitment from attendees, Tilly parlayed this one conference into an annual interracial meeting that mushroomed into a true movement of southern churchwomen over the next  


26 Mrs. M. E. Tilly to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, 16 August 1949, Reel 194, SRC Papers.
27 Celestine Sibley, "Must Sell Democracy to World---Mrs. FDR," Atlanta Constitution, 9 September 1949. For more about this event, see Riehm, p. 24.
29 Riehm, pp. 32-33.
twenty years. The FOC helped foster a spirit of sisterhood between African American and white churchwomen across the South so that they together could forge a new and improved South for all southerners.

3.4 The Fellowship of the Concerned

In some respects, the FOC resembled the ASWPL. Both organizations held that white middle-class Christian southern women had a moral obligation to improve southern society and therefore were uniquely situated to carry out this mission.\textsuperscript{30} An FOC pamphlet claimed,

\begin{quote}
Church women of all faiths and denominations have long furnished valuable moral leadership in the South. Now as never before their active leadership is needed--to help bring our practices in closer accord with the ideals of Christianity and Judaism, to strengthen and broaden democracy, to build a society in which every person can be confident of security and justice. By their determination to see these aims achieved, thousands of Southern church women are joined together in a fellowship that knows no boundaries of race or creed--the Fellowship of the Concerned.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

Nowhere in this document was the controversial topic “civil rights” mentioned. The FOC’s goal was far broader than civil rights, and Tilly, fresh from hostile and negative feedback from her service on the PCCR, did not wish to draw attention to this newly-formed group, so that it could pursue its mission quietly yet effectively.

As did members of the ASWPL, FOC members signed a pledge accepting the organization's goals and their responsibilities within the organization. As with the ASWPL, there were no FOC membership dues; rather, members became part of the larger regional network and could be called upon to assist with a meeting or to resolve a crisis whenever necessary.\textsuperscript{32} These similari-

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{The Fellowship of the Concerned}, pamphlet, ca. 1950, Reel 219, Frames 0001-0004, SRC Papers.
\textsuperscript{32} Hall, \textit{Revolt against Chivalry}, pp. 172-73 and pp. 179-80; Riehm, p. 24; Mrs. M. E. Tilly to Mrs. H. M. Duffill, 17 November 1949, Reel 194, Frame 0660, SRC Papers.
ties between the two groups are not surprising, since both Dorothy Tilly and her mentor in the CIC and ASWPL, Jessie Daniel Ames, had risen through the ranks of southern Methodist women’s organizations such as the WMS. In these organizations, they learned the techniques of interracial meetings, such as having meeting attendees return home armed with information to host local gatherings and evangelize what they had learned.

The FOC was also quite different from its predecessor. Unlike the ASWPL, the FOC had no formal structure (except for Tilly's role as its leader), no letterhead stationery, and no field secretaries. Additionally, although the ASWPL was by design an all-white organization, Tilly from the outset invited both white and black women to attend annual FOC conferences, so that the "membership" at the conference level was interracial. This practice echoed the Christian Leadership Schools of the 1930s, in which Methodist women of both races met for a week and then took their knowledge home to educate others of their experiences. The FOC conferences were significant for they brought together black and white women of varying faiths in a social setting, many for the first time, where they could join together in fellowship and prayer, interact as equals, share common issues as mothers and wives, and develop tactics to improve the South. Although the ASWPL was forced to confront the volatile issues of race and sexuality commonly associated with lynching, it largely acquiesced to the status quo of segregation. The FOC, on the other hand, defied segregation from the start because Tilly included African American and white women at the annual conferences, and organizers of state conferences did the same. The sexual politics of its activism were far more threatening than the sexual politics of anti-lynching activism, volatile as that had been. Supporting integration meant advocating that

33 For more information about the ASWPL's structure, see Hall, Revolt against Chivalry, pp. 159-84.
white and black children and white and black adults be in the same places, which had had much more direct sexual implications for its opponents. As a result, the FOC, had far fewer "members" than did the ASWPL.36 Many southern liberals dropped out of racial reform in the late 1940s and early 1950s because they disagreed with the push for desegregation and social equality.37 By then southern liberalism had shifted from thinking about ways to create parity between distinct black and white societies to thinking about ways to integrate blacks into white society. Additionally, the early 1950s also witnessed a decrease in membership rolls of the SRC, due to more conservative forces such as the House Un-American Activity Committee becoming more influential and fearsome.38

The FOC conferences were similar to its predecessors, the Christian Leadership Schools and interracial Bible studies, in that they were designed to enlighten, educate, and inspire attendees to take their newfound knowledge back to their communities and act upon the ideas that had emerged during the meeting. After each conference, Tilly would mail “Gleanings” or highlights from the conference along with any other literature that might help the attendees go forth and put into action things they learned at the two-day meeting.39 Potential attendees were recommended to Tilly by their national or regional church organizations. Once a woman attended a

---

36 Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry, p. 179 and Arnold Shankman, “Dorothy Tilly and the Fellowship of the Concerned,” in From the Old South to the New: Essays on the Transitional South, ed. Walter Fraser, Jr. and Winfred B. Moore Jr. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 244; Riehm, p. 38. By 1942, the ASWPL had over 40,000 members. In contrast, the FOC’s network in 1950 included less than 5000 women.


39 Riehm, p. 33.
conference, she might be called upon by Tilly to assist with the statewide workshop for the following year.\footnote{See, for example, Mrs. M.E. Tilly to “Dear Friend,” December 10, 1956, Reel 195 Frame 0017, SRC Papers; Riehm, p. 33.}

### 3.5 From Interracial Conferences to Interracial Activism

A fundamental difference between the Christian Leadership Schools of the 1930s and the FOC of the 1950s and 1960s was that several white women who attended FOC conferences, expanded the interracial experience at the conference to include interracial activism at home, as instructed by Tilly. Naturally, some white churchwomen were freer than others from racist attitudes, and these women even engaged in integrated prayer groups and activism with African American women as early as the 1940s.\footnote{Transcription of audio recording on Feb 3, 1988 between V. Durr and O. Andrews, p. 1 SPRS22 Durr, Virginia, Oral History Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama (hereinafter, ADAH).}

Olive Andrews, a white woman from Montgomery, Alabama had created the first integrated prayer group in Montgomery in the 1940s.\footnote{Ibid.} She was a member of the all-white Trinity Presbyterian church in Montgomery, in which she taught Bible school. One day the church had an African American guest speaker from Tuscaloosa named Myrtle Williamson, who was in charge of the Bible department at Stillman College. Williamson and Andrews connected later that day, and Williamson told Andrews of a “conference of Negro women” held each summer at Stillman. Williamson invited Andrews to speak at the conference that summer, which she did. This became the first time in her life that Andrews had eaten with African Americans in a social setting. Andrews at first admitted having a “sort of scary feeling” when she presented her talk – because it was the first time in her life that she “had ever been the minority.” Although teaching
blacks in a Bible study was, as she described, “paternalistic,” after a time Andrews was asked to coordinate the conference. During this experience she realized that “all people are just people,” and she found it very difficult to make the transition between the integrated experiences in Tuscaloosa and the racial tension back home in Montgomery. She felt that “[Y]ou just had to change your personality altogether almost to get back into Montgomery.” Because these women did not want to wait a whole year to meet, Andrews organized an integrated Bible study group in Montgomery. News of her work reached Dorothy Tilly, and at some point in the 1950s, Tilly invited Andrews to the annual FOC meeting in Atlanta. Andrews recalled her first FOC meeting as “remarkable” because at the conference “Mrs. Tilley [sic] had every color under the sun...” and “we all went together, black and white.” From that time on, Andrews’s interracial group in Montgomery was considered part of the FOC.43

Jane Schutt of Jackson, Mississippi was a younger FOC member whose activism was rooted in the civil rights movement and who embraced integrated activism in the early 1960s. Schutt, a white, middle-class mother and housewife, was a member of Tilly's Fellowship of the Concerned and the president of Mississippi's Church Women United during the mid-1960s. She was involved in the "Jackson Movement," and served as a member of Mississippi's biracial Civil Rights Committee. Schutt experienced antagonism from whites who opposed her civil rights activism. One winter night in 1962 a cross was planted and set afire in her front yard. Undaunted, Schutt used it as an outdoor Christmas decoration.44 Schutt also led an integrated Girl Scout

43 “Unsung Heroes and Heroines” by V. Durr, introduction to the Durr/Andrews transcription, and also Transcription of the Tape recorded on February 3, 1988 of Durr/Andrews, pp. 1-5, ADAH.
troop.\textsuperscript{45} In a letter Schutt wrote to Tilly following the 1964 annual FOC meeting, she exclaimed that “The inspiration and information I have received in each meeting of the Fellowship of the Concerned have spurred me on to new effort when all seemed pretty hopeless.”\textsuperscript{46} Schutt went on to report that as a result of the 1961 FOC meeting, she had been able to form an interracial and interfaith meeting group in her community. This led to an association with African American women such as Clarie Collins Harvey, founder of Womanpower Unlimited, an organization created to assist the Freedom Riders whose goals evolved into voter registration activism.\textsuperscript{47} Schutt enclosed a copy of Womanpower Unlimited’s brochure on their “First Workshop on Race,” and in the letter she enthusiastically explained that “Mrs. Clarie Harvey and Womanpower Unlimited have been our strong allies in each endeavor. Our progress has been very slow, but we feel it has been sure and solid.”\textsuperscript{48} In 1966, Tilly asked Harvey to lead a discussion group at the Jackson, Mississippi Fellowship of the Concerned meeting and five years later, in 1971, Harvey became the first African American woman and first southern woman elected as President of United Church Women.\textsuperscript{49}

In 1960, Genevieve Lexow of Florida participated in the annual Fellowship of the Concerned meeting in Atlanta, acting as a "Chairman" who reported on the Church and Human Relations workshop. One of the recommendations that came from this workshop was that women of

\textsuperscript{45} Myra Ottwell Williams, “Mississippi Remixed: A Fresh Look at Race Relations in the South,” www.mississippiremixed.com (accessed December 5, 2011) In this movie by Myra Ottewell Williams, she recalls that she was not permitted to remain a member of the integrated Girl Scout troop, led by Jane Schutt, because her mother would not allow her to do so.

\textsuperscript{46} Jane M. Schutt to Mrs. M. E. Tilly, 8 March 1964, Reel 199, Frames 0022-0023, SRC Papers.


\textsuperscript{49} Mrs. M. E. Tilly to Mrs. Martin L. Harvey, 31 October 1966, Reel 200, Frame 0021 SRC Papers; and Bella Jarrett, "CWA Assembly Breakthrough," response, pp. 33-34, Box 2, Tilly Papers, Emory University.
both races should better "understand each other." Tilly had suggested that the attendees reach out to women of other races and faiths using common points of interest to begin a dialogue. Six years later, in June 1966, Lexow wrote Tilly describing how Tilly's encouragement at the 1960 FOC meeting had led Lexow to contact an African American woman named Susie Holley. At first these two women discussed their respective children’s weddings, but eventually the conversation turned to how Holley could get assistance to expand a daycare and preschool facility for underprivileged children in South Broward County, Florida. Thus began Lexow's journey of interracial activism with Holley and other African American women.

It is not often one sees the far reaching extent of ripples that spread out from a pebble thrown into the sea—or a word spoken into a large crowd. It may please you to hear about the ever-widening influence of a simple statement you made one day in a meeting of the Fellowship of the Concerned in Atlanta in 1960.

You asked each of us to make a gesture of friendship such as a telephone call about a mutual item of interest to an acquaintance of another race or faith. ‘Ah! this is an assignment I can do easily, with no great danger of extensive involvement,’ I thought.

And so the telephone call was made and Susie Holley and I discussed the weddings of our children which had taken place earlier that year. Before hanging up she said, ‘I have wanted to talk with you about establishing an extension of our Cradle Nursery in the southern part of the County. Do you know whether or not there is a need and who I could contact?’ It was not difficult to refer her to Mrs. Wright, a fellow UCW who had dreamed of a day nursery for children of her neighborhood; nor could I refuse to accompany her on the first interview. From then on the story of the South Broward Cradle Nursery is one of ever deeper involvement in a project which has been one of the most harrowing and most rewarding I have ever experienced.

I am enclosing a report and statement of goals which was compiled one

---

51 Genevieve Lexow to Mrs. M. E. Tilly, 8 June 1966, Reel 200, Frames 0379-0380, SRC Papers.
year ago. Today I have been notified that the Office of Economic Opportunity has approved our nursery for development in their day care program in the county. Far sooner than we dreamed possible our goals are being reached!

The real milestones on this journey are difficult to put into words. Having participated in the venture from its first appearance as a wistful dream, at first reluctantly, through periods of chagrin and despair; hope, humility and joy, I am deeply grateful that it has become a recognized channel of service that is soon to be enlarged in many directions.

I am sure you will understand the quality of the blessing which has come to one who timidly took a faltering first step. Thank you, Mrs. Tilly for planting the “mustard seed” and for the inspiration of your deep commitment to the Way of Love.\(^52\)

Lexow’s letter reveals her growth as she overcame her fear, reached across the racial divide, and discovered what could be accomplished when black and white women worked together. It also reveals the transition of her attitudes and activism over time and the pride she felt in her accomplishments. Moreover, her efforts run true to the mission of the FOC in that they were more along the lines of human rights initiatives and not confined to civil rights. Tilly’s directive to the women of the 1960 FOC meeting seemed innocent enough: “make a gesture of friendship such as a telephone call about a mutual item of interest.” Tilly did not make her suggestions naively, for she knew through experience the power of interracial communication along common issues, and that such experiences across the racial divide could make the impossible suddenly possible.

Schutt's letter and Lexow’s letter to Tilly are significant for many reasons. First, they demonstrate how white and black churchwomen were working together in interracial prayer meetings and workshops.\(^53\) They also reveal that the commitments churchwomen made at Tilly's interracial two-day conferences were successfully implemented at the local level in many in-

\(^52\) Ibid.

stances. Although FOC conferences were not limited to civil rights, attendees such as Schutt found ways to apply tactics learned at FOC conferences to local civil rights activism. Lastly, both are examples of the gradual yet enduring success of the interracial experiences that FOC meetings provided.

In other cases women who attended the FOC meetings also experienced epiphanies about their own power in creating and allowing change. It was during the 1956 FOC meeting that Willa Lindsay of rural Cairo, Georgia realized her role in effecting social change. After returning home, she wrote Tilly: “The problems of the rural church and community are many, broad, and deep in regards to their race relations, but I was made aware at the meeting that ‘I’ am a key person to answer the challenge it presents.”\(^{54}\) Lindsay’s realization and those experienced by others across the South were, essentially, the lynchpins of Tilly’s strategy – having churchwomen understand that they held a very powerful role in society, and in turn using their role as churchwomen to improve society.

African American women’s experiences were also important to FOC efforts. Tilly brought together women of both races so that they could meet as equals in an integrated setting and understand each other as southern mothers and wives. She knew from her experiences in similar meetings in the 1930s that this tactic would work to eliminate stereotypes whites held about African Americans.\(^{55}\) It would also help African American women reverse prejudiced attitudes they held about whites. Following the 1964 FOC conference, Constance Wyatt, an African American woman from Norfolk, Virginia, wrote Tilly:

> I trust that this letter will find you and the other members of the Council well, and continuing your efforts to help create in the south, a wholesome atmosphere for men to live in, changing the hearts of men. I pray continually that this may one day become a reality.

\(^{54}\) Willa Lindsay to Mrs. Tilly, November 2, 1956, Reel. 195, 0002-0004, SRC Papers.

\(^{55}\) Riehm, pp. 40-41.
Mrs. Tilly I must tell you that mere words can not express the effect attending The Fellowship of the Concerned had upon me. This was my first trip into the deep south and quite frankly I had no previous desire to go there, because I have often said, “Lord, deliver me from anyplace worse than Virginia,” the land where I was born. My family and many of my friends expressed their concern when I told them I was about to embark on a trip to Atlanta, Georgia, to attend an integrated [sic] meeting. I must confess that I had grave doubts and many reservations about Attending the meeting.

Now as I think about the trip I can not recall any other experience in my life that has helped me to reshape my opinions and ideas concerning the white man in the south. Living the life of a Negro in the South does not give one the opportunity often to see Christian brotherhood in Action. Therefore we often have deep rooted hostilities and doubts about the Christian faith in America.

I had never heard about the Southern Regional Council before and did not believe and probably would never have believed, had I not been present, that such a meeting was possible in the South during these times. I doubted that people could come together and sit down and discuss sanely and intelligently the problems which really exist in the South. The meeting did much to renew my belief that with God all things are possible.

Mrs. Ann Fullman from New Port News [sic], Virginia was my roommate and traveling companion, we enlightened each other through many frank conversations during the trip.

Mrs. Tilly, I am now telling my friends that as bad as race relations are in Virginia and other parts of the South, there are some people here with a genuine concern for the problems with exist here. The concerned who are willing to witness of their concerns not merely with words but with deeds also. Good and bad deeds have a way of speaking so loud that I can’t hear what you are saying.

We now pray, ‘Lord help us so that all we speak with our lips, we will believe in our hearts and all we believe in our hearts we will practice with our lives.’ It is my fondest wish that will have the privilege to meet you again in another mountain top experience of ‘The Fellowship of the Concerned.’

Tilly also engaged African Americans as speakers for FOC conferences to arm attendees with facts about African Americans and their organizations. Attendees could use this infor-

---

Mrs. George W. (Constance) Wyatt, Jr., to Mrs. Tilly, 1 February 1965, Reel 199, Frames 1208-1211, SRC Papers.
formation to dispel myths and stereotypes in their own communities and learn firsthand about the African American experience in the segregated South.\footnote{Riehm, pp. 33-34.} Ruby Hurley, an active member of the Methodist Church and a regional director for the NAACP, participated in annual and local FOC meetings educating attendees about the important role held by the NAACP.\footnote{For information on the South’s reaction to \textit{Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas} decision, see Dittmer, pp. 46-48; and Aldon D. Morris, \textit{Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change}, (New York: The Free Press, 1984), pp. 26-30.} In 1961, Tilly was able to secure Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his wife, Coretta Scott King, as participants. Mrs. King led the women in song and Dr. King addressed the attendees.\footnote{Mrs. M. E. Tilly to Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr., 14 April 1961, Reel 197, Frame 0295, SRC Papers.} The couple’s participation demonstrates that the leader of the civil rights movement and his wife, who was becoming more involved with the Peace movement and who had joined the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom during the early 1960s, believed the FOC’s work to be significant.\footnote{Riehm, p. 33 and Joyce Blackwell, \textit{No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975} (Southern Illinois University Press, 2004) pp. 166-167.}

In February, 1965, following the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Mrs. Ella Mae Brayboy, an African American, married mother of three from Atlanta, and a driving force for African Americans in local voter registration, gave a speech at an Interfaith Conference organized by Dorothy Tilly.\footnote{For more on Brayboy, Garrison-Harrison, C. “Ella Mae Brayboy and the Voter Education Project” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, 2011-03-13, All Academic Research, \url{http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p153835_index.html} (accessed December 5, 2011).} Brayboy shared her experience of growing up in the segregated South, the lack of educational opportunities available to her, the discrimination she faced in the job market, and her realistic assessment of how much would change in the post–Civil Rights Act period:

\begin{quote}
The Civil Rights Bill has opened a new world of public accommodations to us because before in order to see a first run picture we would have to climb to the top of the house at the Fox or save our money for years to go to New York or Chicago to have some freedom. But this bill has not erased
\end{quote}
some unpleasant memories that are connected with some public places. As I go in some places I cannot help but wonder how I will be accepted. Older people do not adjust as fast as young people. A bill cannot wipe out 350 years of discrimination and injustice in a few years—the scars will linger on along with mixed feelings.

I am wondering just how long it will take for Negroes to really integrate. How long will it take for us to really be accepted economically? We have got to be accepted and get jobs with decent salary [sic] or else we cannot share or become part of this ‘Great Society.’

Brayboy’s words harkened back to the human rights goals enumerated by the National Negro Congress in 1936. Brayboy not only shared her first-hand account of her life experiences as an African American living in the South, but she also provided an historic perspective of the long civil rights struggle in this country.

In 1967, Coretta Scott King returned to the FOC annual meeting, acknowledging the organization’s good work and the friendship she shared with Tilly. King closed the conference with a brief and prescient speech in which she spoke frankly about the fact that her husband’s work exposed her family to great danger, and that if it brought “death to her or to her family, she would have to accept it, that there was no turning back.”

### 3.6 The Southern School Desegregation Crisis and the South’s Shock Absorbers

By 1953 the landmark Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas Supreme Court case was winding its way through the courts. As such, Tilly shifted the FOC’s strategy that year

---


to overtly meet this controversial issue head-on. While Tilly disagreed with segregation, she understood the gravity of this 1954 Supreme Court decision to the South.

The FOC represented more than an annual conference; it also was a strong and extensive network. Tilly had learned during her days as an anti-lynching activist that, during times of crisis, she could reach out to her network for assistance in almost any southern community. Therefore, anticipating the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on school desegregation in 1953, Tilly wrote to her constituents to ask them to become the "interpreters and shock absorbers of this decision." Only two months after the annual FOC conference, Tilly sent attendees a letter asking for reports on any action taken by churchwomen in their communities in preparation for the upcoming Supreme Court decision and alerting them to the volatility of the pending decision:

We appreciated your presence at the meeting of the Fellowship of the Concerned in October.

We were wondering if you have been able to have any Discussion Groups on the possible Supreme Court decision. If so, we would like to hear from you about them. We would also appreciate a story about anything else you have done in this line, such as the distribution of literature, etc. Many things have already come as a result of that day’s planning, but we feel we are just beginning the facing of a difficult situation.

As you know, South Carolina passed an amendment last year to its Constitution to cease to operate public schools under the direction of the state. Georgia has just passed a similar bill to 'give away' the schools, thus endangering the system of public schools that it has taken over 100 years to perfect.

The ‘give away’ plan, as you may know, is that the funds of the State will be given to local parties. They in turn will set up a board or Commission which will give funds to each child and designate to which school he shall go.

Of course, this evasion of any Supreme Court decision will not hold, but in the meantime the public schools will be destroyed. Teachers’ pensions and the accreditation of schools will be lost. The two groups who will suffer the most

---

65 See Riehm, pp. 34-35.
66 For more on Tilly’s dire predictions, see “Chapter 2: Southern Dissent on the PCCR.”
67 Dorothy Tilly to the Conference and District Secretaries of Christian Social Relations, 31 July 1953, Reel 195, SRC Papers.
will be the children and the teachers. Both in this case are unable to speak for themselves, but church groups can do so.

We are enclosing a statement passed by the Executive Committee of The Women’s Society of Christian Service of the Methodist Church, North Georgia Conference.

We believe it is going to be most necessary that the women know their law enforcement officers, so we urge that they call on their sheriffs and chief-of-police. It might stand in good stead if the Supreme Court outlaws segregation and racial hatred flares up.68

For the next several years Tilly and the FOC shifted their focus to “preparing white southern society for segregation's inevitable end.” Tilly understood that most southern whites would resist forced desegregation because laws did not change people’s hearts. So she proactively refocused her network of southern churchwomen to change the attitudes of white women - specifically mothers, wives, and teachers - so that they in turn could set examples in their homes, churches, and communities by teaching tolerance and acceptance.69

Almost a year after the 1954 Brown decision, Brown II was handed down by the courts in May 1955 urging that states desegregate their schools using “all deliberate speed.”70 Three months prior, in February 1955, Tilly called a special FOC meeting to address the rising tide of massive resistance against the Brown decision and what was certain to be defiance against the upcoming Brown II Supreme Court decision. During this meeting, Tilly reinforced and supplied her network with new information and tactics because as Tilly explained, “the disturbed and perturbed South presents a challenge to the faith and courage of church women….”71

Noreen Tatum, Alabama FOC member and director of Children’s Work for the North Alabama Conference Board of Education of the Methodist Church, spoke about desegregation at this special FOC meeting. Tatum implored churchwomen to make a thoughtful decision on desegregation by examining their souls and considering the unique opportunity given to them – as white women - to change the South for the better.  

We women of America are therefore trustees of a precious gift, because we are among a minority group privileged to enjoy the fruits of freedom in our own day and age. To us is entrusted not only the right use of the freedom which is ours, but also the extension of its precious privileges to all mankind. Can it be that God had this in mind when he created YOU and ME? Can it be that he is trusting in US to help work his purposes out for our own crisis-laden generation? Are we willing to be used of him in this way?

If so – we can be, here and now, in our own communities, in our own churches, in our own homes. For our generation – and particularly our Southland – is faced with an unprecedented opportunity, an opportunity which has never before been given in like measure or in like form to any other generation or group of Christian women: the opportunity of extending the privileges which we so cherish and enjoy to a group within our midst who have been set apart and limited in their pursuit of life liberty and happiness.

In her speech, Tatum also tried to get the women to broaden their interactions with African Americans in order to eliminate stereotypes. To this end, she asked “How wide are your friendships? Do you really know…A Negro school teacher?... Any Negro woman who does not have to depend on domestic service for a livelihood? Would you be willing to widen your friendships so as to include one or more of these?” Tatum used her words to try to get the women to understand what it must be like to be an African American in the Jim Crow South. She appealed to the women as mothers, “How Christ-like is your imagination? Have you ever

---

72 Riehm, p. 35.
73 Mrs. Candler Tatum, "What Shall I Do about Desegregation?" February 1955, Reel 194, Frames 1580-1582, SRC Papers.
74 Ibid.
stopped to listen…” to a Negro mother explain to her little boy why he could never sit on the fascinating front seat of a bus where he could watch the driver shift gears and punch buttons to open the doors and steer the big bus safely through city traffic?”

About three months after the special FOC meeting in 1955, the Alabama FOC convened, and one of the issues they tackled in this meeting was what they could do about the attacks on the NAACP. The NAACP had argued the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas before the United States Supreme Court and, since the court rendered its decision that segregation was unconstitutional, the organization had been under increasing attack in the South. The state of Alabama attempted to make NAACP dealings illegal in that state. Ruby Hurley of the NAACP addressed the Alabama Fellowship of the Concerned about the mission and work of the NAACP. Hurley spoke candidly about life as an African American in a white supremacist society and discussed why organizations like the NAACP were so important. Alabama FOC members could then use the facts Hurley provided to counter slanderous attacks on the NAACP.

At the close of 1955 Tilly wrote to former fellow PCCR member Sadie Alexander. During the 1947 PCCR deliberations, Alexander had opposed Tilly’s position and argued with her on what wording should be in the PCCR’s final report regarding segregation and education. Recalling that experience against the 1954 and 1955 Brown decisions Tilly wrote, “Things are coming to pass, aren’t they? Our report on Civil Rights is really archaic now, isn’t it? In our wildest dreams we never thought things would happen so quickly – but they really are not happening in

75 Ibid.
76 For more on the reaction to the Brown decision, see Klarman.
77 For information on the South’s reaction to Brown see Dittmer, pp. 46-48; and Aldon D. Morris, pp. 26-30.
79 Riehm, p. 33.
many spots in our sections. I do want you to know though, we are trying. Tilly’s letter reflects both the optimism of the groundbreaking decisions and also the reality of a reluctant and resistant South, which Tilly not only predicted in 1947 but also had to help move forward.

In the years that followed the 1954 and 1955 Brown decisions, the school desegregation crisis spread across the South from Little Rock, Arkansas to Atlanta, Georgia, and beyond. On May 22, 1959, Tilly spoke before the Congressional Subcommittee Civil Rights Hearings in Washington, D.C. about the school desegregation situation in Georgia. In giving her credentials, Tilly indicated that she had held many offices within the Methodist Church, both within Georgia and also regionally in the South. She stressed that her work with women’s organizations of the Methodist church had been in the realm of human rights. She also reminded her audience of her participation in labor hearings of the AFL-CIO, and claimed, “I have worked in all the fields of human rights.” Here, at a civil rights hearing, Tilly overtly labeled herself as a human rights activist, which grounded her activism in a movement that transcended the civil rights movement and therefore lent more credibility to her testimony. Even at the start of her speech, Tilly said that she wished to “change the trend of today’s session,” so rather than discussing a litany of civil rights infractions as her predecessors had done, she focused her time in front of this subcommittee on the “climate” in her native state of Georgia with respect to the segregation issue.

In her introduction, Tilly applauded the recent court decisions “that are helping us along to a more democratic way of life, which we will reach fully some day.” Tilly’s comment about the court decisions was, on one hand, intended for those segregationists who absolutely abhorred any federal government intervention in southern affairs. Tilly also remarked that the goal of the

---

80 Dorothy Tilly to Sadie Alexander, December 29, 1955, Reel 196, SRC Papers.
81 Dorothy Tilly, address to Congressional Subcommittee, Civil Rights Hearings, May 22, 1959. The full text of this speech is found in Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, eds., Women and Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965 (University of Mississippi Press, 2009).
democratic way of life had still not been achieved, despite the federal involvement. This comment harkened directly back to the debate in the PCCR meetings in Hanover, New Hampshire and in Washington, D.C. in the summer of 1947, in which Tilly’s plea to her PCCR colleagues to not force desegregation because it would only lead to resentment, defiance, and violence. Her comments were prescient; practically everything she cautioned about during those PCCR deliberations came to be.

In her speech, Tilly also apologized to the Committee for her South, but then shared her optimistic vision of a brighter future by invoking her deep faith and providing a vision of the South that she believed Jesus Christ had intended:

Social changes come slowly, always, and perhaps a little more slowly within the five Southern States than anywhere else in our Nation. But we will finally get there sometime -- because we are in the Bible half, and I believe some day we will reach the place where we will translate what we read in the Holy Writ into action.

We talk a lot about our way of life. And I think when that time comes when we can translate that which we read into daily action, we will find the way of life is the way of the Master.

Tilly then described for her audience the lengths to which the current governor (Ernest Vandiver) and two former Georgia governors (Herman Talmadge and Marvin Griffin) had worked since 1953 to defy the court decision that outlawed school desegregation. Each executive declared that during their respective terms, there would be no race-mixing in Georgia’s schools. In 1953, anticipating the Supreme Court’s decision on school segregation, Georgia’s legislature in the Talmadge administration “ordered a referendum on a constitutional amendment to end the public school system and substitute private schools to keep segregation in effect in Georgia.”

---

82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
In 1956, during Griffin’s administration, Georgia’s legislature submitted six more bills that defied the school desegregation decision. Five of these bills were passed, including one that mandated the closing of public schools if ordered to desegregate by the federal government. Tilly claimed that a full one-third of Ernest Vandiver’s gubernatorial inauguration speech in January 1959 was devoted to anti-school integration rhetoric and was full of anti-federal government sentiment.\textsuperscript{85} Vandiver accused the federal government of “punishing the South with a second Reconstruction.”\textsuperscript{86} Furthermore, he declared that during his administration, he would not allow the federal government to take over Georgia’s schools or universities. Another one of Vandiver’s bills was to allow the collection of taxes for segregated schools, but it forbade tax collection for integrated schools. Vandiver also pushed for six more bills regarding schools and segregation to be made law under his administration. One of these bills was to prevent African Americans from entering Georgia’s universities. According to Tilly, this bill caused a lot of controversy but, despite the publicity against it, Vandiver signed it into law. Tilly completed Georgia’s bleak picture by adding that the head of the States Rights Council, in response to anticipated forced school desegregation, declared that Georgians would vote to close their public schools rather than have them integrated.\textsuperscript{87}

Tilly proffered all of these examples to prove to her audience that the situation in Georgia was dire and quickly reaching a climax, because many expected all of the Georgia schools to close by 1960 or 1961. Undaunted and optimistic, Tilly also told of the positive and hopeful inroads that many organizations, such as the Fellowship of the Concerned and other interracial groups and activists, were making in this very volatile environment, especially within the City of

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Dorothy Tilly, address to Congressional Subcommittee, Civil Rights Hearings, May 22, 1959.
Atlanta. In this part of her speech, Tilly held Atlanta up as an example not only for the rest of the State but also for the rest of the South. She offered examples of interracial groups and city and local minority leadership coming together and working together to solve social issues such as bus integration and golf course integration, and in doing so in the most peaceful methods possible in order to sustain enduring positive social change. In 1959, school closure was averted in Atlanta due in large part to a women’s group entitled Help Our Public Education (HOPE).  

School systems in other southern states such as Arkansas, Virginia, Alabama, and others did not fare as well. The Virginia schools in several cities closed rather than be desegregated, depriving students of both races of public education until most of the schools reopened a year later.

Although school integration was by far the most controversial and volatile issue faced by the South since the federal government’s first involvement in civil rights in the late 1940s, Tilly remained optimistic for her South because of the work of southern churchwomen. Toward the end of her speech, she stated that “[T]he hope of the South is in the women. They have to be the interpreters and the shock absorbers of the social change.”

Tilly knew that the white South would never voluntarily accept federal intervention in its affairs, especially if it meant affording blacks the same opportunities as whites and having children of both races attend the same schools. Her opinions had been confirmed in 1947 and 1948 by the furor that erupted after the PCCR recommended sanctioning federal grants-in-aid to school systems that remained segregated. The reaction to that recommendation foreshadowed a long battle over southern school desegregation. The South would be dealing with school deseg-

---


90 Dorothy Tilly, address to Congressional Subcommittee, Civil Rights Hearings, May 22, 1959.
regression until the late 1960s until, one by one, southern school systems which had defied the court’s ruling in 1954 had to eventually abide by the Supreme Court ruling.

In September 1963, nine years after the U.S. Supreme Court declared school segregation unconstitutional and after several lawsuits, African American students in Birmingham, Alabama, began to desegregate all-white schools in that city. Birmingham was the hometown of Noreen Tatum, who had spoken to her white churchwomen constituents in the special-called meeting in February 1955. Despite attempts by Alabama governor George Wallace to close the schools rather than desegregate, two young children, Dwight and Floyd Armstrong, desegregated Birmingham’s Graymont Elementary School, and Richard Walker desegregated the City’s Ramsay High School in early September 1963. The reaction from the white racist community was hostile and violent. On September 15 a bomb exploded at the 16th Street Baptist Church, killing four young girls: Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley, Addie Mae Collins, and Denise McNair.

About one week before the bombing, Tatum wrote to Tilly offering her first-hand experience as a mother and a white supporter of school desegregation as her daughter's school, Ramsay High School, was desegregated when Richard Walker enrolled there. Tatum recounted the first few days of desegregation at the school. Tatum’s faith convinced her that God had given her the opportunity to make positive changes in southern society, even by reaching out to African American students.

Marielon is a student (junior) at Ramsay High School. Yesterday was a day without incident. Only one student has to be sent home because he couldn’t behave himself in class. Richard Walker, the Negro boy is in

---

91 Interview with James Armstrong, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute [http://rg.bcri.org/gallery/](http://rg.bcri.org/gallery/) (accessed March 26, 2012). Armstrong, father of Dwight and Floyd Armstrong, explained that he and his children were refused admittance to the school the first day they attempted to desegregate it. On that day there were about “250 hecklers” and “state troopers planted all around the building” to prevent the African American students from entering. The desegregation eventually occurred a few days later on September 10, 1963.

Marielon’s English class. She said he was not mistreated at all in class though none of the students spoke to him. He sat at the back of the room, and the teacher called on him to answer a question which he did, rather timidly, but correctly. Marielon said if he were a girl she would be friendly. But for his sake as well as hers she hesitates.

I do not know what today will bring. There was a meeting last night which I understand had as its purpose stirring up Ramsay students to walk out like Woodlawn students did. As I took Marielon to school I saw only one group walking away from school, and a motorcycle policeman stopped them and was very evidently trying to talk them into going back.

Marielon did not want me to go to school with her but I did wait at the foot of the ramp until I saw her get inside the building. One of my good friends teaches at the Woodrow W. Elementary School, which is in the general vicinity of the Graymont school, and she says they are being flooded with requests for transfers – people selling their homes (Putting them up for sale) and renting rooms or apartments in their Woodrow Wilson school district so they can get their children in there and out of Graymont. Isn’t it all but unbelievable that the presence of two little children could cause so much consternation and turmoil? I’ll tell you more when I see you.

Love always,
Noreen (Tatum)

P.S. I had what was veritably a God-given chance to speak to the Negro boy at Ramsay the day he was turned away. I don’t know that in his harassed [sic] state of mind he realized I had tried to say a kind word of encouragement to him – but it eased my heart just a little.

N. 93

Tatum’s letter also allows us to see the influence that Tatum's work had on her daughter, who wanted to befriend the new "Negro" boy in her English class. Her daughter’s sensitivity to the sexual politics of integration made her aware that in her white supremacist society a white girl's friendship with a black boy would expose him to danger. Opponents of school desegregation regularly objected to such friendships because they believed that they would lead to "race-mixing." Although civil rights activists repeatedly denied that this had anything to do with their goals of equity and fairness, they often had to face those kinds of charges.

Forced desegregation did not change people’s hearts for the better. In many instances, the federal government’s intervention hardened the hearts of many whites who, at first, defiantly and violently opposed desegregation. In some cases, state and local governments attempted to avert the court’s ruling by establishing equalization schools.⁹⁴ As time went by and school desegregation spread all over the South, the whites’ defiance assumed a different approach during the late 1960s and 1970s in a phenomenon called white flight. White families who could afford to move out of cities facing integrated public schools did so to mostly white suburbs with very low if any minority population.⁹⁵ All reactions against forced school desegregation were fueled by either hatred, ignorance, fear, or some combination of one or more of those crucial ingredients to preventing positive social change.

The approach Tilly and Graham opted for in their dissent in the PCCR’s report admittedly would have taken a much longer time, but it would have, in their minds, resulted in a truly voluntarily integrated society, where people of all colors would have abandoned their hatred, fear, and ignorance for love, acceptance, and understanding. Tilly admitted that the approach taken by the PCCR in TSTR, which heavily influenced the federal government’s involvement in civil rights, did make some people shift their white, racist attitudes. However, as she predicted, for so many in the South it did not, and massive resistance against school desegregation proved to be violent, pernicious and tenacious, as school desegregation did not complete until the end of the 1960s.

⁹⁵ For more on white flight, see Kevin Michael Kruse, White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism, (Princeton University Press, 2005).
3.7 FOC Human Rights Activism and Civil Rights Activism

The FOC was founded because southern churchwomen were concerned for the future of their South and did not confine activism to the civil rights movement. FOC human rights initiatives included the FOC’s first official campaign which tackled injustice in the southern court system. The “Know Your Courts as You Know Your Schools” program had southern churchwomen visit courthouses and jails to ensure justice was meted out for all, regardless of race. Additionally, the themes of annual and statewide FOC conferences were not necessarily about civil rights. For example, the 1958 Alabama FOC meeting’s theme, “Woman’s Role in the Affairs of the World,” was far broader than civil rights and included keynote speakers such as South African Violaine Junod, Mrs. John L. Sanders, a native of Japan, and Vera Chandler Foster, wife of Luther H. Foster, Tuskegee Institute’s president and an active member of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

During the 1965 annual FOC conference, FOC members suggested that churchwomen focus on ending police brutality. This initiative came about because of the highly controversial and well publicized tragedy witnessed by millions, as television cameras broadcast unthinkable acts of police brutality against non-violent protestors who attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, Alabama while demonstrating for voting rights. In response to this egregiously violent attack, Tilly called for a national interracial conference of women to address this cause.

---

96 For more on the FOC’s “Know Your Courts as You Know Your Schools” program, See Riehm, p. 33.
97 For more on Vera Chandler Foster, see Blackwell, p. 172.
Tilly’s FOC also tackled subjects such as studying the status of domestic workers with the possibility of helping them organize.\textsuperscript{100} This effort was reminiscent of the activism of some progressive-minded Methodist women who, during the 1930s, examined the plight of domestic workers within their own households.\textsuperscript{101}

In accord with the United Nations’ designation of 1968 as International Human Rights Year, Tilly named the FOC meeting that year "International Human Rights Year--the Twentieth Anniversary of the Adoption of "The Declaration of Human Rights.""\textsuperscript{102} In organizing the 1968 conference using human rights as the main theme, Tilly acknowledged the significant work of the United Nations and reinforced the FOC’s ongoing support of human rights as a goal that was inextricably linked with the group’s civil rights activism. The 1968 meeting’s theme was reminiscent of Tilly’s 1947 “Conference on Human Rights and World Order” – held at a time of optimism and promise in the early post-war era, while the PCCR was still meeting and before it birthed \textit{TSTR}.

For this 1968 meeting, Tilly engaged Leticia Romas Shahini of the United Nations’ Division of Human Rights to give the opening address.\textsuperscript{103} Tilly’s choice for keynote speaker recalled Eleanor Roosevelt’s keynote speech at what became the first official FOC meeting in 1949, in which she discussed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.\textsuperscript{104} Clearly, the women of the FOC did not limit their efforts to the civil rights movement, but they also perceived themselves as human rights advocates who were responsible for influencing and instigating positive change globally.

\textsuperscript{101} For more on this, see “Chapter 1: From Southern Race Relations to National Civil Rights.”
\textsuperscript{102} Mrs. M. E. Tilly to Dear Friend, August 15, 1968, Reel 200, frames 1222-1223, SRC Papers.
\textsuperscript{103} Speaker listing from the Fellowship of the Concerned meeting “1968- International Human Rights Year,” Reel 220, SRC Papers.
\textsuperscript{104} Notes from “Fellowship of the Concerned: Workshop of Southern Church Women, September 8-9, 1949, Reel 194 SRC Papers; Riehm, p. 24.
While FOC conferences were not ostensibly about civil rights, Tilly carefully chose the civil rights causes that would be supported in annual FOC conferences. Certainly federal civil rights legislation was something that Tilly wanted to succeed. Ten years after the PCCR called for civil rights legislation, the country still lacked any strong civil rights laws and there seemed to be an unlimited supply of massive resistance to counter the movement. The Civil Rights Act of 1957 was met with so much resistance that Tilly convened another special conference so that her churchwomen could focus on investigating voting registration patterns throughout the South in order to expose inequities and ensure compliance with the federal law.\(^{105}\)

After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Tilly sought ways to revamp the format of the FOC annual meetings.\(^{106}\) In preparation for the 1965 FOC meeting, Tilly asked several members of her network to survey and report on the degree to which southern cities were complying with the Civil Rights Act. The results of this survey were disturbing, for in some cases such as in Montgomery, Alabama, resistance to civil rights forced her FOC members to exclude African American women from participating, for fear of reprisal.\(^{107}\) Clearly the ongoing resistance in Montgomery and in other southern cities resulted in some whites withdrawing from the interracial tactics that Tilly and her churchwomen espoused.

As the civil rights movement continued into the 1960s, Tilly and the FOC supported its peaceful efforts such as the student sit-in movement and the Freedom Rider movement.\(^{108}\) However, when Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists became more militant and destroyed property at Leb’s restaurant in Atlanta during a protest in January 1964, FOC


\(^{106}\) Mrs. M. E. Tilly to Miss Thelma Stevens, 23 February 1965, Reel 199, Frames 0841-0842, SRC Papers; Riehm, p. 37.

\(^{107}\) “1965 Report from Montgomery.” Box 2, Folder 8, Tilly Papers, Winthrop University.

\(^{108}\) Riehm, p. 37.
member Mrs. C. M. Weston wrote a letter to John Lewis, President of SNCC, voicing her disapproval. Weston's letter reflects her disappointment with the protesters' lack of respect for safety, property, and authority, but more importantly, it juxtaposes the generational and tactical differences between the churchwomen and their brand of activism and the increasingly militant tactics of SNCC.

3.8 Conclusion

Dorothy Tilly was indeed a civil rights activist and, in fact, her participation in Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights places her as one of the critical figures of the post-war civil rights era, one who forged a course for the federal government to follow in securing civil rights for all Americans. Tilly thought of herself first and foremost as a human rights activist, and she was remembered as such in a posthumous tribute to her by Paul Anthony, who was, at the time of Tilly’s death, the executive director of the SRC.

Tilly was the only PCCR member to live continuously in the South in the wake of the publication of To Secure These Rights, and some white supremacists never forgot or forgave her for her service on that committee. In 1958, a full ten years after her service on the PCCR, she was discredited in a newspaper article written by an ardent segregationist from Montgomery, Alabama, who referred to her disparagingly as “Aunt Tilly.” The use of the term “Aunt” or “Uncle” by a white person toward an adult African American was intentionally meant to demean and disrespect adult blacks. This salutation was intended as an insult, as the author also focused on Tilly’s

---

110 Mrs. C. M. Weston to “Mr. John Lewis and Members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Com.”
ly’s PCCR membership and discredited the work of others on the PCCR, intimating that those members had Communist ties.  

We are also in receipt of a letter from Mrs. M. E. Tilly which is entirely too long to take up this week. We will present this note from the nation’s own ‘Aunt Tilly’ whose record goes back to Harry Truman’s infamous Civil Rights Committee of 1946 which was a dilly which included such people as Dr. Channing Tobias (the Negro front man), and others, which will be discussed in length as soon as we can get the Congressional Records. The Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, can furnish additional information on these.

This article reveals that more than ten years after the PCCR issued its report, white supremacists in the deep South still considered the PCCR and its recommendations as a critical rupture and threat to the South’s social order.

In the post-PCCR era, Tilly looked for ways in which southern churchwomen could extend their influence in shaping the recalcitrant South. Her experience in the Christian Leadership Schools of the 1930s and her role on the PCCR led her to hold annual interracial conferences in Atlanta from 1949 to 1968. During these conferences, churchwomen leaders of both races lived together, prayed together, ate together, and met to discuss social problems and devise plans of action to make their vision of a better South for all a reality.

From the late 1940s on, Tilly’s influence extended to the national and even international spheres. Over the course of her career, Tilly was recognized as a human rights leader and as such was called on domestically to moderate the labor hearings of the AFL-CIO in Detroit and, internationally, when she accompanied the United Nations’ American Committee for Palestine to

---


Palestine in 1949 to observe the proceedings in determining the new Jewish state. Over the course of her career Tilly was sought by four United States presidents as an advisor and expert in the field of race relations and civil rights.

As late as the mid-1960s, when Tilly was in her eighties, she was still sought after by other younger women activists, such as African American Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women, for her organizational skills that brought women of both races together. Height invited Tilly to the organizing meetings of a new interracial and inter-regional group she was founding called “Wednesdays in Mississippi,” which brought together black and white women from the northern states and Mississippi in order to find common ground on which to build bridges of understanding – something Tilly had been doing for almost forty years. Tilly was a bridge across movements, generations, religions, and racial divides. Tilly’s mission, across these diverse yet intertwined connections, was optimistic and unwavering, demonstrating universal themes such as justice, peace, the ability to earn a living, education, housing, and others that fall under the larger encompassing rubric of human rights activism.

Unlike politicians, who had to delicately balance their actions against an increasingly massive resistance to the civil rights movement, Tilly quietly yet skillfully continued her life’s work in human rights using methods she learned from her Methodist sisters in the 1930s to navigate the storm-ridden waters of a violent civil rights movement, which she perceived to be a sub-

---

114 Dorothy Tilly, “The Background,” n.d., Box 2, Folder 2, Tilly Papers, Winthrop University.
115 Tilly served Franklin D. Roosevelt as the Director of Emergency Food Production under the Farm Security Administration and on the National Committee on Segregation in Washington, DC. See Donald R. McCoy and Richard T. Reutten, Quest and Response: Minority Rights in the Truman Administration, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1973); Tilly, “The Background,” Tilly served Truman on his Civil Rights Committee. John F. Kennedy summoned Tilly in 1963 to join the National Women’s Committee for Civil Rights (“Church Leader Called for JFK’s Conference,” Herald (Sharon, Penn., July 10, 1963, Box 2, Folder 6, Tilly Papers, Emory University). Lyndon B. Johnson requested Tilly’s participation on the National Citizens Committee for Community Relations, see Lyndon B. Johnson to Mrs. M.E. Tilley, July 10, 1964, Reel 199, SRC Papers.
set of the larger human rights movement. Through the tumultuous years of the 1950s and 1960s, Tilly carefully intertwined movements, skillfully weaving in various and selected threads of the civil rights movement as she continued furthering the absolute goal of human rights for all. Also, unlike politicians who ultimately sacrificed the United Nations human rights movement for the more narrowly defined civil rights movement in the late 1940s, Tilly never short-circuited one movement in favor of the other. Tilly’s reliable methods, utilizing interracial meetings in which churchwomen studied problems before deciding a plan of action, was always strategic. Her work with churchwomen to raise more tolerant children was recognized in 1955 by Marion A. Wright of the Southern Regional Council in 1955, as the “most strategic” work being done in southern race relations.\footnote{Marion A. Wright to George S. Mitchell, 24 August 1955, Box 1, Folder 5, Tilly Papers, Emory University.} In fact, in the post-PCCR decades of the 1950s and 1960s, Tilly created her own movement, an amalgam of the human rights and civil rights movements that influenced and inspired a new and interracial generation of churchwomen activists. Tilly understood that racism was volatile and violent and that any sudden or forced change with respect to civil rights in the South would arouse the ire of white supremacists. Tilly’s work in the years following the PCCR did not provoke massive resistance and, in some cases, it had far-reaching effects as it helped to change the racial attitudes of some whites in the next generations.
CHAPTER 4: DROPPING A MATCH INTO THE DRY AND PRICKLY UNDERBRUSH OF SOUTHERN PRIDE AND FEAR: POLITICAL FALLOUT INSTI-
GATED BY THE PCCR

There was some talk sometime [sic] ago about you running for
governor of North Carolina. I'd like to see you run now, to see
how far you would get.¹

J. S. Davis to Frank Graham, November 2, 1947

4.1 Introduction

When Robert K. Carr convened a meeting of the PCCR on September 12-13, 1947 in
Washington D.C. to finalize its report, Frank Graham was present. He, along with Dorothy Tilly,
voiced disagreement with the approach the report had put forth to end segregation in schools,
because it amounted essentially to blackmailing the South into choosing between education and
segregation. During his career, Frank Graham had fought long and hard trying to convince the
South to accept federal aid to public schools, and he feared that the tactic recommended in To
Secure These Rights (TSTR) would kill public education in the South.

Graham came from a background similar to Tilly's, in that he was a white southerner
reared in a religious home. The Grahams were staunch Presbyterians. As an adult, Graham was
an elder in his Presbyterian church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Graham was also a highly
educated man who ran the first state university in North Carolina, and who believed strongly in
the value of a public education. His interest in public education was directly attributable to his

¹ From J. S. Davis to Frank Graham, November 2, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Frank Porter Graham Papers,
1908-1990, #01819, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of
North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereinafter, Graham Papers).
father’s influence. Alexander Graham had been superintendent of the Charlotte Public Schools and believed that all children, regardless of class or race, deserved a sound public education.\(^2\)

Frank Graham believed in the “education of the whole person characterized by the development of social responsibility.”\(^3\) During the 1930s, Graham’s reputation as a southern liberal grew and he became an ardent New Dealer who became increasingly involved in national issues that dealt primarily with the struggling economy and the plight of the downtrodden. In 1933, President Roosevelt appointed Graham as vice chair of the Consumers Advisory Board.\(^4\) In 1934, Graham was appointed to another federal committee, this time as chair of the Advisory Council on Economic Security. His work on this committee led to the Social Security Act, which he believed would be a step in the direction for the “renewal of democracy.”\(^5\) Two years later, Roosevelt summoned Graham to serve again, this time on a committee “to study the relationship between the federal government and state and local education.”\(^6\)

In 1938, Graham chaired the Committee on Economic Conditions in the South (CECS) that wrote the *Report on Economic Conditions of the South*, a document that illuminated the gross disparities between the North and South, especially in economy and education. Almost directly following that experience, Graham joined the nascent Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW) and became its first president.

By the end of the 1930s, Graham was becoming more ensconced in the Washington political scene through his various appointments to federal committees. During the war, he would

---

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 106.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 141.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 145.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 149.
continue to serve under Roosevelt, and as the 1940s unfolded, would enter the national discourse on race relations.

Although he returned to Chapel Hill after World War II, another presidential appointment was waiting soon thereafter - to Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights. This Committee and its report proved to be pivotal in the field of civil rights, and even though Graham represented a well-respected liberal who served on national committees prior to serving on the PCCR, he became one of the first casualties in the political fallout over the PCCR’s recommendations regarding segregation and education four years prior to the Brown decision.

Graham understood his native South and human nature, and he was therefore convinced that the surest way to win enduring acceptance of desegregation would be over time, through education and religious programs. After much heated debate during the two late summer days in September 1947, Dorothy Tilly and Graham and the remaining PCCR members ultimately agreed to disagree on the matter of federal withholding of funds to segregated schools. Even after agreeing to dissent, Tilly, the more emotional of the two, was still concerned about the report’s tone and claimed that, while the dissent would absolve her and Graham, it would not save the Committee’s report. While the dissent may have saved Tilly so that she could continue her work in race relations in the South, Tilly could not have been more wrong with respect to Frank Graham because three years later this report would help kill Graham’s brief political career as a United States Senator from North Carolina.

This chapter will explore how a white southern liberal, Frank Graham, expanded his activism in the 1940s through political appointments to some controversial committees, and thereby became enmeshed in the increasingly complicated national discourse on race relations, even

---

before his PCCR appointment. It will then demonstrate how the PCCR’s recommendations instigated a conservative backlash in southern politics, beginning with House and Senate southern Democrats who criticized the report and decried the committee (especially Graham). The resistance escalated after Truman’s message to Congress in February, 1948 and culminated in the creation of a separate political party – in essence a split in the solid Democratic South. The chapter will then examine how, three years after TSTR was published, the PCCR’s recommendations would come back to haunt Graham in North Carolina’s Democratic primary for United States Senator. His role in the PCCR would be ultimately responsible for his defeat in the primary race. Graham’s political career was the second casualty, after Claude Pepper, of the conservative political backlash that was instigated by the PCCR’s recommendations and continued until the defection of Southern Democrats to the Republican Party in the 1960s. Lastly, the chapter will look briefly at Graham’s career beyond politics as he moved away from the South and enjoyed a long career with the United Nations.

4.2 Graham Enters the National Discourse on Race Relations

By the 1940s, Frank Graham was well established as a leading southern liberal as well as leading proponent of public education. In the late 1930s, he had been instrumental in coordinating the completion of the Report on Economic Conditions in the South and was a founding member and first president of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, although he was concerned at getting too involved with Communists.8 Southern problems aggravated by the Depression gave way to opportunities illuminated by the New Deal and Graham understood that the South needed to change. He was a southern liberal activist with a particular kind of humanitari-

---

an vision, in that he believed all humans were equal in the eyes of God. Graham personally be-
lieved that segregation was morally wrong and envisioned the end of segregation through educa-
tion and religion. He also understood that, as a result of the New Deal, the South could benefit
from federal intervention. Graham had encountered resistance at times due to his activism in
controversial issues concerning race relations, but he always held firm to his beliefs. By 1940,
he had earned a reputation as someone who was level headed and progressively minded.9

During the first Roosevelt administration, Roosevelt sought Graham to chair the Advis-
ory Council on Economic Security.10 In September 1936, toward the end of his first administra-
tion, Roosevelt again enlisted Graham, this time to chair a large committee for the initial purpose
of evaluating vocational education. By mid-1937 Roosevelt enlarged the committee’s scope to
address the “relationship between the federal government and state and local education.” By this
time Graham was already a staunch supporter of federal aid to education so his membership in
the Advisory Committee on Education seemed a natural fit for him. This committee made a
“radical” recommendation in 1938 to provide for “federal aid to public schools.” The committee
did discuss the matter of federal control over education and the committee “recommended that
where there were racially segregated school systems there should be an equitable allocation of all
federal funds without any cut in the existing state appropriations to Negro schools.”11 Graham
understood that without federal aid, children in southern schools would continue to lag behind
the other regions in the country and would lack “equal opportunity.” A bill based on the com-
mittee’s recommendation made it to the House, where it died due to the fear of “federal control
of schools.”12

---

9 Ibid., pp. 268-273.
10 Ashby, p. 143.
11 Ibid., pp. 148-149.
12 Ibid., pp. 149-150.
During Roosevelt’s third administration, Graham was highly sought after to serve on many committees, especially as the United States became fully involved in World War II. In 1941, Franklin Roosevelt called Graham to Washington, appointing him to the National Defense Mediation Board, which transformed into the War Labor Board after the United States officially entered World War II in December, 1941. This started a pattern for Graham of living in Washington for much of the war and surprisingly, even as President of UNC, spending only weekends at the University in Chapel Hill. Graham’s presence in Washington during the war meant additional opportunities for him to join boards of other national organizations whose causes were meaningful to him.

The racial genocide against Jews during the Holocaust awakened a greater concern about racism for many in America, and organizations such as the Council Against Intolerance (CAI) sought ways in which to teach tolerance in schools as a means of eradicating racism. The CAI’s mission was to work within the schools to train teachers in educating white students about minorities in order to dispel stereotypes about them, so that they would develop a sense of tolerance and fairness towards all. This organization was a natural fit for Graham because it identified education and the schools as a primary vehicle for social change, and he served on this council during the war. Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Harold Ickes, A. Philip Randolph, and Bishop Francis J. Haas, who would later serve on the PCCR, all served on the CAI. This organization published a monthly magazine, *American Unity*,

---


14 From Henry A. Atkinson to Dr. Frank P. Graham, April 7, 1944, Folder 1689 in the Graham Papers. Atkinson was the Co-Chair of the Council Against Intolerance.
which was distributed nationwide to thousands of teachers claiming that it would build “a new generation – without prejudice towards any American.”

Graham also sat on the National Committee of the Friends of Democracy, which was founded in 1937. Mary Bethune McLeod was among its other prominent board members. As the end of World War II approached, this organization sought ways to prepare for and mitigate the upturn in racial violence that was expected after the war’s end. Like the CAI, its tactic was education and exposing its members to information on “obstructionist newspapers such as the New York Daily News; the Chicago Tribune; the Washington Times-Herald” and other publications, and on subversive groups and personalities such as Gerald L. K. Smith.

Other organizations which had Graham as a member were the India Famine Relief Committee, Inc., on which he served alongside Will W. Alexander and, during the war, he served as a sponsor to the Japanese American Citizens League. During World War II this organization, among its other efforts, monitored the treatment of Japanese Americans who were imprisoned by the United States in internment camps following the attack on Pearl Harbor. As if his schedule was not demanding enough, in November 1943 Graham accepted an invitation to sit on the National Fair Employment Practices Commission.

Graham’s heavy involvement in federal committees during the 1940s, many of which dealt with minorities issues fulfilled his inherent need to be socially responsible and “to serve a

17 From Richard J. Walsh to Dear Committee Member, January 7, 1944, Folder 1693 in the Graham Papers. From Teiko Ishida to Dr. Graham, February 23, 1944 in the Graham Papers. Ishida was the Acting National Secretary for the Japanese American Citizens League. For more on Graham’s experience with Japanese Americans during the war, see Ashby, pp. 229-230.
worthwhile cause.”¹⁹ These various organizations and federal commissions sought Graham not only because of his liberal stance but also for his influence. Like Tilly, Graham was a human rights activist long before human rights became fashionable during the late war and post-war period with the founding of the United Nations. A radio address Graham gave in 1944 reveals his humanitarian beliefs and the strategy he believed would work best in eliminating prejudice and hate.

There is no magic formula for the conquest of prejudices and animosities. The three main ways to overcome group animosities are by (1) education, (2) equality of opportunity, and (3) a spiritual sense of the sacredness of human personality. By education we come to understand the profound origins of racial, religious, and social prejudice and through that understanding gradually overcome personal prejudice and group animosities.

More powerful than even education and the American dream is the spiritual sense of one world, one human family, of all men as brothers and sons of God without regard for color, creed, or national origin.²⁰

The following month, in another attempt to educate whites about African Americans and inform listeners about what North Carolina was doing to improve the opportunities for them, Graham gave another radio address in which he stated:

There is no more loyal group of our fellow citizens than the American Negroes, north and south. In the last decade more negroes graduated from American colleges and universities than in all the previous history of the race. In my own state of North Carolina, the legislature is providing for a twelve year, nine-months school system for all the white and colored children in the state, and is making further provision toward the equalization of pay for white and negro teachers in accordance with the opinion of Federal Judge Parker of North Carolina.²¹

---

¹⁹ Ashby, p. 106. Ashby describes Graham as having a “powerful ambition to do something with his life, to serve a worthwhile cause.”


²¹ MY PEOPLE” February 13 [1944] STATION WOL 7:00 – 7:30, Folder 1745 in the Graham Papers.
Graham and others such as Joseph J. Proskauer, President of the American Jewish Congress, participated in many radio broadcasts during the war, capitalizing on that medium to influence and educate audiences against intolerance and prejudice.\textsuperscript{22} By 1944 Graham had been appointed to sit on the National Committee of the National Urban League and, in recognition of his reputation for excellence in education, was also asked to join the National Advisory Committee of the newly founded United Negro College Fund.\textsuperscript{23}

On April 2, 1944, Graham gave the address on Founder’s Day at Tuskegee Institute, in which he explained that World War II was a watershed event that provided a unique opportunity to remake the world in the days after the war:

World War II is a global, total and revolutionary war...This is not only a global war involving all continents, seas, and skies, but it is a total war involving all the people and all their industries and institutions. The old victories for human liberty can be preserved only in the revised versions of the new struggles for democracy. Liberty can be raised to higher levels by the widening of social security. The old Bill of Rights can be saved only by provision for a new Bill of Rights.”\textsuperscript{24}

Graham’s speech received wide publicity, including an article in \textit{TIME} magazine. Graham received accolades, requests for advice, and criticism for his speech. Russell B. Babcock, an Army officer whose primary job was training other military officers, asked for a copy of the speech because in his role he was:

specifically interested in material which will make sense to Negro troops who ask ‘What has American democracy given me which warrants my sacrifice in this war effort?’ The \textit{TIME} Magazine (April 10, 1944) account of your address at Tuskegee is the type of information that would be most


\textsuperscript{23} From Eugene Kinckle Jones, General Secretary to Doctor Graham, n.d., Folder 1745 in the Graham Papers and From F. D. Patterson to Dr. Graham, Feb 9, 1944, Folder 1745 in the Graham Papers.

\textsuperscript{24} Dr. Frank P. Graham, “FOUNDERS DAY ADDRESS,” April 2, 1944, Folder 1745 in the Graham Papers.
helpful.

I trust you will not think me presumptuous in writing you. The information is important and the group of officers who attend this school are most important.²⁵

Within a month, a white Mississippian serving as a captain in the segregated United States Army wrote a letter to the editor of TIME magazine from Italy, expressing his dislike of TIME’s coverage of Graham’s Founder’s Day Speech. He denounced and discredited any advancements made by African Americans and disparaged Graham as a “famed liberal.”

I am certainly not as qualified to argue about vital statistics of the negro race and its accomplishments as is the noted educator Frank P. Graham, but being a native Mississippian, I do know and understand the negro and his capabilities. Let’s continue to help the negro when we can but on the other hand let’s not try to fool ourselves into believing he has contributed anything toward the development of higher civilization, because he hasn’t. And when you ‘ponder’ over that and rack your brain to remember a few of the contributions of the negro race to society, remember to consider only the real full blooded negro like the late Dr. George Washington Carver – not a few outstanding cases of ‘so-called’ negroes who have a lot of white blood flowing in their veins.”²⁶

Graham also received the following criticism from a Savannah, Georgia resident who claimed that education would never improve the African American experience. Like many white supremacists, the author of this letter could only point out that, in his opinion, ending segregation would only result in mongrelization of the races.

I note you keep in the public eye on the Negro situation. You are one of three things ignorant, fond of Negroes or get pay for it to promote Negro…. The Negro is an ape he has always been a savage or a slave you can educate him but he is still Negro, Education does not improve them except to be better able to skin another Negro.

…God or Nature made the people and they were made to stay separated… Did you ever see any other animals mix dog & cats, Ducks or chickens, lions & tigers. When you see white & black children in school together, they grow

²⁵ From Russell B. Babcock to Frank Graham, April 17, 1944, Folder 1746 in the Graham Papers.
²⁶ From Capt. W.B. L. Wells to “The Editor, Time Magazine,” May 12, 1944, Folder 1746 in the Graham Papers.
up without knowing the differences, they marry, and produce Mongrels….

After the Tuskegee speech, Graham received several letters from a variety of other southerners who voiced their displeasure with his viewpoints. By this stage in his activist career, Graham was accustomed to this criticism and it did not seem to distract or dissuade Graham from his work in human relations.

Graham’s involvement with these varied liberal organizations and his role as a social commentator across the radio waves reveals not only his liberal stance toward race, but also that his position as a traditional southern liberal was expanding outside the region to concern himself with human rights issues for minorities other than African Americans and across the nation. Graham began reaching a national audience during the war as his various radio addresses permitted him to share his humanitarian vision in seeking human rights for all. Graham also broadened his scope to include international humanitarian efforts with his work in Indonesia. Internationalism was a natural extension of the work he was already performing. Graham’s involvement spanned many activities and work on behalf of many people. Nevertheless, it was Graham’s work on behalf of African Americans in the American South that brought harsh criticism from southern white supremacists, who demanded that the southern customs of Jim Crow be maintained.

---

27 From William J. Moody to Frank P. Graham, April 17, 1944, Folder 1746 in the Graham Papers.
28 See, for example letter from Carl D. Taylor to Dr. Frank B (sic) Graham, May 21, 1944, Folder 1746 in the Graham Papers; letter from R. R. Harper to Dr. Frank P. Graham, April 28, 1944, Folder 1746 in the Graham Papers; letter from Kate Porter Barnett to Graham, April 18, 1944, Folder 1746 in the Graham Papers, in which Barnett asks “May I ask shall we, in time, have social equality?”; letter from L. C. Albright to Graham, April 4, 1944, Folder 1746 in the Graham Papers. This letter was sent after Graham’s address at the Tuskegee Institute Founders Day celebration, April 2, 1944.
4.3 Southern Politicians React Against “To Secure These Rights”

By January, 1946, with the war over and no need for a War Labor Board, Graham returned to Chapel Hill to devote more of his energies to the university. However, just before the year ended, Graham was once again tapped to serve on a presidential committee - this time by Harry S. Truman. After many months of work on the PCCR, the committee issued its final report in October, 1947.

Although Graham wrote the dissent from the report’s recommendation to withhold federal money from segregated schools, he did endorse the Committee’s report. Graham, Tilly, and the others who dissented did so anonymously and their anonymity was deliberate, so as not to undermine the overall report. Immediately after the report was published, Graham received many letters from southerners who wanted to know his stance on the matter of the dissent.²⁹

Graham was a public figure, known nationally as a southern liberal, and he received both accolades and criticism for his role on the PCCR and for TSTR from people across the nation. Several who applauded Graham for his work, such as J. T. Taylor, perceived the TSTR as a critical step toward world peace:

> Yet, through the courageous efforts of leaders like yourself and Mrs. Tilly in this area, and countless others whose names never meet the public eye, we have every reason to be optimistic about America, not only as an arsenal of democracy but as a leader in the world’s struggle for peace.³⁰

S. Ralph Harlow, professor of “religion and social action”³¹ at all-female Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts and an NAACP board member, suggested to Graham in a letter

---

²⁹ See, for example letter from Mrs. B. E. Chaney, to Graham, Oct. 29, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers; letter from W. J. Crutchfield to Graham, November 8, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers.

³⁰ From J. T. Taylor to Graham October 30, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers.

³¹
that Graham run as Truman’s Vice-Presidential candidate in the 1948 election. Graham was also well respected by other colleagues on the PCCR and his advice was highly sought, even by those who opposed his position on the matter of withholding federal funds from segregation schools, such as Sadie Alexander. In December, 1947 Sadie Alexander wrote Graham asking for his help with ongoing activities related to the committee’s work.

Graham’s involvement in various committees that dealt with minorities issues across the nation prepared him for service on PCCR and his influence is seen in *To Secure These Rights* because it included many recommendations addressing all racial minorities in the United States – not just southern African Americans. The report revealed that the Committee had gone far and wide in its research and recommendations, which included addressing issues such as “the evacuation of Japanese-Americans from the West Coast” and the need to make “restitution.” The report also called for self-governance of U.S.-held territories such as Guam, the Panama Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands. The PCCR also recommended Alaska and Hawaii for statehood. However it was the recommendations concerning the ending of segregation and the issue of segregated schools that alarmed white southerners – politicians, newspaper editors, and citizens alike.

Within three weeks of the PCCR issuing its report, U.S. Representative Emanuel Celler, a Democrat from New York, introduced three bills into the Congress specifically “to carry out recommendations of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights.”

---

32 From Harlow to Harry Truman, Oct. 31, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers.
33 From Sadie Alexander to Graham, December 3, 1947, Folder 2026 in the Graham Papers.
34 Nash, “Science, Politics, etc.,” p. 193, Nash Papers.
Council of Hartford, Connecticut petitioned the Committee on the Judiciary announcing its adoption of a resolution “approving the report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights.”

From the South, the reaction from elected officials was very different. First and foremost, from the Deep South, Mississippi’s House of Representatives issued the following House Concurrent Resolution, explicitly denouncing the report and claiming to speak for all Mississippians:

A Concurrent Resolution of the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi Memorializing the Congress of the United States of the Grave Apprehension and Vigorous opposition of the people of this state to the recommendations of President Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights, and urging opposition to Any Congressional enactment of Said Recommendations.

Furthermore, Mississippi’s “acting governor” Oscar Wolfe, who was temporarily substituting for vacationing governor Fielding White, issued a strong statement decrying the PCCR’s recommendation to abolish segregation immediately. Wolfe implored “all decent white people” to oppose the Committee’s call to end segregation, claiming in a hyperbolic statement that “[H]istory shows that where any nation has not practiced segregation of races, but allowed miscegenation and amalgamation of races, the custom has always resulted in the destruction of the nation that permitted this crime against nature.” Wolfe accused “outside interference and meddlers” with creating this problem.

---

36 93 Cong. Rec., p. 10884 (Petitions, November 26, 1947), Georgia State University Law Library, Atlanta, Georgia.
37 “Mississippi House Concurrent Resolution #22,” Reel 10, Box 1513 Frame 00700, President Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights Papers, edited by William E. Juhnke, Black Studies Research Sources: Microfilms from Major Archival and Manuscript Collections, A Microfilm Project of University Publications of America, Inc. Frederick, Maryland, 1984. Microfilm # 1729, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. (hereinafter, PCCR Papers, Emory University).
39 Ibid., p. 5.
Concurrent with the publication of *TSTR* was Mississippi’s senatorial election to replace the late Senator Theodore G. Bilbo, and the senatorial race could not help but focus on the PCCR’s recommendations.\(^{40}\) Several southern papers followed, noting how *TSTR* would influence this election. On November 1, 1947, the *Savannah Evening Press* reported that as the six-man race wound down, “[A] defense of Southern traditions and a condemnation of ‘outside influence’ of Mississippi affairs were the final battle cries of the campaigns on the road.”\(^{41}\) On November 2, 1947, the *Atlanta Journal* carried a similar story entitled, “‘Civil Rights’ Echo In Bilbo Seat Race: Mississippi to Elect Senator Tuesday; Candidates Take Up ‘Interference’ Cry.” In this piece by Romney Wheeler, the various candidates were quoted about the PCCR and the *TSTR*. Forrest Butler Jackson, whom the article indicated “claims to be Bilbo’s political heir…. called the committee’s report ‘an insulting demand on the people of Mississippi’ and predicted resentment would elect him.” Another candidate, William Meyers Colmer, claimed the report meddled in the South’s business, and “cried it was ‘another effort to try to tell the South and Mississippi how to run its affairs.’”\(^{42}\) In northeast Mississippi John Rankin, whom Wheeler described as a “shrill-voiced, tired old man of 65,” capitalized on the PCCR’s report and “heaped vituperation on the Committee and reiterated long-time convictions that Mississippi is white man’s country.”\(^{43}\) The man who ultimately won the senatorial race, John Stennis, remained the most calm in his reaction to the PCCR and *TSTR*, but he was nevertheless adamant that Mississippi would not be controlled by the federal government, stating “[our] customs and traditions


may be assailed, but we can stand firm in our rights to make our decisions about such matters.” The more extreme race-baiters lost the election, yet their reactions to the PCCR’s report were quite negative and, along with the other unfavorable comments from southern politicians, foreshadowed the coming of a political backlash.

In Georgia, a few days after the PCCR issued its report, Herman Talmadge, who had been ousted from his questionable appointment to the governor’s office earlier that year by the Supreme Court of Georgia, called TSTR “an insult to every Southerner…which insists on breaking down every prestige of segregation…which insists upon the passage of a Federal Employment Practices Law which would place a Government bureaucrat in control of every business in the United States.” Talmadge also insisted that the report would “destroy” the country’s democracy and “would place in control of all businesses Government bureaucrats, tinged with Communism.”

A few weeks later, on November 20, 1947, Clyde R. Hoey, United States Senator from the historically more politically moderate state of North Carolina, addressed the issue of segregation in the schools and defended the separate school system in his state as the “only basis upon which peaceful and harmonious relationship can be maintained throughout the South and the Nation.” His views against the end of segregation are clear in his condemnation of the PCCR’s report as one that:

> betrays a woeful lack of understanding of the real conditions which exist in this country. Some of its recommendations are good, but others fail utterly in offering any solution of the race problem. To adopt the views of this committee throughout would result in chaos, rather than in orderly and peaceful conditions, and would hinder the great progress which is now being made in a fair and just determination of the race problem to the good of all.

---

Despite the negative reaction by southern politicians to *TSTR*, by the end of 1947 the initial reaction to the PCCR’s report had quieted down, and the Truman White House had done nothing further with the report. This inaction likely relieved the southern politicians, while it certainly frustrated those who wanted Truman to make good on the recommendations put forth by the PCCR. Nevertheless, southern politicians had their proverbial guard up, and rightly so, because by December 1947, the Truman administration realized it needed to do more than just endorse *TSTR*.

### 4.4 *Truman Takes the PCCR Recommendations to Congress*

In the weeks following the publication of *To Secure These Rights*, some northern state and local governments endorsed the report, while southern state and local governments and southern members of the United States House and Senate unequivocally denounced it on many levels. Many white southern politicians took the Committee’s recommendations and Truman’s role in forming the Committee as an affront to their white supremacist southern heritage.

In the late fall of 1947 and continuing into the early winter of 1948, Truman had at least three foes who wanted to succeed him as president – New York’s Governor Thomas E. Dewey; former Vice President Henry Wallace, and Governor Harold E. Stassen of Minnesota. While the mainstream press may have been mainly focused on issues such as the situation in Europe and the mounting Cold War, minority publications such as the *Atlanta Daily World* would not allow its readership to forget about the recommendations made in *TSTR*. In mid-December, it reported

---

about the lack of response by those seeking the presidential nomination in either party to the NAACP’s “request . . . for opinions on the Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights.” In November, 1947 NAACP’s chair Walter White had asked all three: “Do you approve of the Committee’s recommendations? If not, will you tell us which ones you disapprove and the reasons for your disapproval?” By mid-December only Stassen had responded, albeit cautiously, writing on December 5, 1947, “In response to your letter of November 14, I consider the report of the Wilson Committee on Civil Rights to be a superb document. I give it general support now and intend to speak on its recommendations in detail in the coming months.” New York’s Republican Governor Thomas E. Dewey did not respond directly but rather his executive assistant James C. Hagerty did. Hagerty wrote, “A careful reading of the recommendations leads me to believe that the State of New York under Governor Dewey’s leadership has already taken many of the steps which the report recommends.”

The more radical Henry Wallace offered criticism of the PCCR and its report in late November because although the report commented on the decline in lynchings, it neglected to note the simultaneous rise of police brutality. The Atlanta Daily World’s editor C.A. Scott agreed with Wallace, “[A] mere glance at the number of Negroes being killed by city and county officers of the law in most of the southern communities will convince us of the logic in Mr. Wallace’s speech. Everywhere and under the slightest pretense, officers of the law in the South mow down Negroes and trump up satisfactory reasons for their action before the courts.”

Wallace also castigated Truman for his inaction on pushing forward the recommendations in the report. In December the Atlanta Daily World reported that Wallace had demanded President Truman issue an executive order establishing an inter-departmental committee to abol-

ish discrimination in federal employment. Further, the newspaper article reported, Wallace called for the enforcement of the report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights…” and quoted him as stating “I don’t want that report to be pigeonholed. We simply cannot afford – in world affairs or in terms of our domestic economy— to neglect the important human problems involved. The poll tax must go.” Lastly, Wallace declared: “[D]iscrimination and segregation must be ended. We can’t live, successfully --- by the double standard.” In late December, 1947, Wallace announced that he would be a candidate for President with the newly formed Progressive Party.

Clark Clifford, White House Counsel during Truman’s administration, had predicted accurately that Wallace would go with another party and that Truman’s supporters would have to deal with Wallace as an opponent because he had such a strong following in New York. Truman and his supporters believed strongly that Truman needed to win New York in order to be elected president in 1948. As Clifford recalled:

Yes, I felt very strongly that he’d be in it. He’d be the candidate of the party and we had to take him on. There just couldn’t be any question about it. I think my general attitude was to do it more in sorrow than in anger. The President had liked Henry Wallace and a great many people liked him. He was just misguided; he was unrealistic and impractical. We treated it that way, but we could not go along with the crowd that was for him. They were Reds and Red sympathizers and we had to hit them pretty hard.

---


50 Sullivan, Days of Hope, p. 247.

Truman’s message to Congress on February 2, 1948 resulted directly from pressure exerted by Wallace. In order to counter the success Wallace was making with his liberal platform, Clifford suggested that Truman address Congress with a civil rights message.\(^{52}\)

Now I therefore advised him to go forward with a special message to Congress that demanded it take action with moving forward with the PCCR’s recommendations. This would show Wallace supporters that Truman was serious about civil rights and was placing the responsibility now on the Republican Congress.\(^{53}\)

Truman and his advisors, especially Clifford, believed erroneously that Truman could push more liberal issues to gain political ground on Wallace without jeopardizing support from the southern Democrats, because as Clifford later explained:

The South, historically, had gone Democratic in election, after election, after election. It had gone Democratic four straight times for Roosevelt, and it seemed a safe proposition at that time, but times were changing and changing more rapidly than I was able to foresee.\(^{54}\)

Clark sent a lengthy memorandum to Truman in the fall of 1947 in preparation for the upcoming 1948 presidential election. The memo, prepared by James H. Rowe, Jr., was modified by Clifford and is known informally as “the Clifford memo.”\(^{55}\) In it Clifford practically guaranteed that the South would support Truman regardless of his stance on liberal issues, and it even stated that the South could be disregarded on such national matters. Essentially, according to Clifford, the South was not a major player in this election.

It is inconceivable that any policy initiated by the Truman Administration no matter how “liberal” could so alienate the South in the next year that it

\(^{52}\) Nash, “Science, Politics, etc.,” p. 194, Nash Papers.


\(^{54}\) Oral history interview, Clark Clifford, May 10, 1971, Truman Library.

would revolt. As always, the South can be considered safely Democratic. And in formulating national policy, it can be safely ignored.\footnote{Memo from Clark Clifford to Harry S. Truman, November 19, 1947, page 3, Political File, Clark Clifford Papers, Harry S. Truman Library; Oral history interview, Clark Clifford, May 10, 1971, Truman Library.}

In early January 1948, George Elsey, assistant to Clark Clifford, solicited input from Robert Carr, the PCCR’s Executive Director, for “any views or thoughts in regard to” Truman’s upcoming “special message” to Congress on Civil Rights.\footnote{George M. Elsey to Dr. Robert K. Carr, January 7, 1947, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Files of George M. Elsey, Microfilm # 1729, Reel 10, PCCR Papers, Emory University.} Carr, who coordinated the drafting of \textit{TSTR}, replied at length, recommending at least eleven ideas from \textit{TSTR} for Truman to use in his special message.\footnote{Robert K. Carr to Mr. George M. Elsey, January 16, 1948, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Files of George M. Elsey, Microfilm # 1729, Reel 10, PCCR Papers, Emory University.} Carr carefully selected these, acknowledging to Elsey that:

> it would be utterly unrealistic of him [Truman] to recommend everything that is contained in the Report of the Civil Rights Committee; on the other hand, he must not disappoint those people who have had their hopes aroused by the Report. I think he can solve this dilemma by recommending a substantial, but minimum, program for immediate action and then call for further study of many additional items.\footnote{Ibid.}

Of the items Truman enumerated in his special message to Congress on February 3, 1948, ten came directly from Carr’s response to Elsey and Carr took these ideas straight from \textit{TSTR}, which he helped to author.\footnote{Ibid., and Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on Civil Rights,” February 2, 1948, Public Papers of the Presidents, Harry S. Truman 1945-1952, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, \url{http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1380&st=civil&st1=rights} (accessed March 31, 2012).} Truman’s special message to Congress is, in actuality, a subset of the PCCR’s recommendations put forth in \textit{TSTR}, which further emphasizes the effect of the PCCR’s work.

Although Truman’s message only addressed about one-third of the PCCR’s thirty-five original recommendations – and avoided directly any mention of schools or the issue of segregation (except in interstate transportation) - his message supported unequivocally the PCCR’s recommendation that the federal government take the lead as guardian of Americans’ civil rights.
Truman began his speech with undeniable support for federal intervention via legislation in order to secure human rights for all Americans, explaining that “We shall not, however, finally achieve the ideals for which this Nation was founded so long as any American suffers discrimination as a result of his race, or religion, or color, or the land of origin of his forefathers.” After he lobbed his first salvo, Truman followed with a reference to the PCCR and its report,

One year ago I appointed a committee of 15 distinguished Americans and asked them to appraise the condition of our civil rights and to recommend appropriate action by Federal, State, and local governments. The committee’s appraisal has resulted in a frank and revealing report. This report emphasizes that our basic human freedoms are better cared for and more vigilantly defended than ever before. But it also makes clear that there is a serious gap between our ideals and some of our practices. This gap must be closed.

Truman made one overarching recommendation and that was for Congress to enact legislation at this session directed toward the following specific objectives:

- Establishing a permanent Commission on Civil Rights, a Joint Congressional Committee on Civil Rights, and a Civil Rights division in the Department of Justice.
- Strengthening existing civil-rights statutes.
- Providing Federal protection against lynching.
- Protecting more adequately the right to vote.
- Establishing a Fair Employment Practice Commission to prevent unfair discrimination in employment.
- Prohibiting discrimination in interstate transportation facilities.
- Providing home rule and suffrage in Presidential elections for the residents of the District of Columbia.
- Providing statehood for Hawaii and Alaska and a greater measure of self-government for our island possessions.
- Equalizing the opportunities for residents of the United States to become naturalized citizens.
- Settling the evacuation claims of Japanese Americans.

---

63 Ibid, p.928.
Although Truman watered down the PCCR’s recommendations when addressing Congress, the fact that he elevated even only one-third of the PCCR’s recommendations raised the ire of many southern Democrats. In essence, Truman had picked off the scab of a festering wound that was slowly healing from the fall of 1947 after the initial publication of TSTR. After his speech, southern politicians’ anger erupted against him and against the PCCR and its report all over again.\textsuperscript{64} Many of these southern congressmen and senators interpreted Truman’s speech to be an extension of TSTR. Some believed Truman to be hoodwinked by the PCCR, while others accused him of complicity in the PCCR’s recommendations. Clark Clifford’s seemingly innocuous comment in his November 1947 memo to Truman that decidedly dismissed the South as a viable threat to Truman’s re-election could not have proved more incorrect. Clifford admitted years later that his conclusion about the South “obviously constituted the one major gaffe in the memorandum.”\textsuperscript{65}

\textit{4.5 Southern Politicians React to Truman’s Message about PCCR Recommendations}

On the day following Truman’s speech, congressmen and senators from all parts of Dixie cried foul, as one after another rose to defend their southern way of life and speak adamantly against Truman, the PCCR, TSTR, and the ongoing threat of civil rights being enforced by the federal government. In his speech Truman did not call for an end to segregation in general, but he did specifically call for its end within interstate travel.\textsuperscript{66} The southern politicians who had read TSTR when it was first published and listened to Truman’s message in February were con-

\textsuperscript{65} Oral history interview, Clark Clifford, May 10, 1971, Truman Library.
\textsuperscript{66} 80 Cong. Rec. p. 929 (1948).
vinced that Truman’s initial recommendations would be only the first in a series of steps to end segregation, which the PCCR had called for in October 1947.

In review of the speeches made in reaction to Truman’s speech, two major overriding themes dominated the discussion on the floors of both the House and the Senate. The one heard most prominently from southern congressmen and senators was the threat to punish Truman with a split in the Democratic Party, thus destroying him politically if he did not retreat from his civil rights assault on the South. What angered these politicians primarily was the threatened loss of white supremacy with forced integration, and then secondly the fear of miscegenation. A third, but nonetheless vital issue raised was the charge of communism, which they linked to integration and which they levied against Truman and his supporters. In addition, the PCCR, its report, and some of its members were also targeted by some of these irate southern politicians.

Ultra-conservative Congressman Eugene “Goober” Cox from Georgia was well known for his attacks against the Federal Communications Commission, resulting in the Red Scare in that agency. When he took the floor on February 3, 1948, he asked for “unanimous consent to address the House for 1 minute.” After the Speaker granted permission, Cox hinted that Truman’s actions were forcing southern politicians to reconsider their support for him in a presidential campaign.

I do not like to challenge any statement made by my President, but I would be a miserable slave to fear if I did not take exception to the recommendations made in his message of February 2.

When I read this message I wonder if, after all, Henry Wallace is such a bad man. The President attacks the people of that section of the Country whose

---


68 Brinson, p. 95.
support he must have if he is to hope to be re-elected. The whole thing sickens me.\(^69\)

Following Cox’s statement, Congressman L. Mendel Rivers from South Carolina also requested “unanimous consent to address the House for 1 minute.” Rivers, however, was far more loquacious in his harangue against Truman and even criticized Graham and the Committee’s report. In his statements, Rivers not only linked \(TSTR\) directly with Truman’s February 2\(^{nd}\) speech, he also claimed that Truman’s speech “gives Presidential backing and approval to the recent report issued by the Committee on Civil Rights.” Rivers also complained that “the South had no representation [on the PCCR] to amount to anything- save left-winger Frank Graham, of North Carolina”. Rivers accused Graham of using his role in the PCCR and as co-author of \(TSTR\) to ensure that his home state, North Carolina, “got a pat on the back, and that the rest of the South was held up to ridicule, hatred, and contempt to the Nation.”\(^70\) Rivers was criticizing Graham who, unbeknownst to Rivers, had lobbied for a softer approach in the report back in September 1947 and even wrote the dissent to \(TSTR\). Despite Graham’s pleas for the \(TSTR\)’s drafters to tone down the report, \(TSTR\) exposed the South for what it was, and southern politicians were extremely offended and defensive.

Rivers also complained that the PCCR’s report neglected to praise the South for all it had done in the past to eradicate lynching and didn’t praise how “courageously the southern law-enforcement officers have been combating this thing with encouraging success.”\(^71\) Rivers probably overlooked or ignored the following paragraph excerpted from \(TSTR\), in which the Committee indeed applauded the efforts to reduce lynching.

\(^{69}\) 80 Cong. Rec. p. 975 (1948).
\(^{71}\) Ibid.
Finally, the Committee wishes to call attention to the very substantial and steady decline in the number of lynchings which has occurred in the last two decades. From a high point of 64 lynchings in 1921, the figure fell during the 1920's to a low of 10 in 1928. During the decade of the 1930's the total climbed again to a high of 28 in 1933, although the decade ended with a low of 3 in 1939. Since 1940, the annual figure has never exceeded 6; on the other hand, there has not yet been a year in which America has been completely free of the crime of lynching. The Committee believes that the striking improvement in the record is a thing to be devoutly thankful for; but it also believes that a single lynching is one too many!\textsuperscript{72}

Within the report the PCCR went into great detail describing the various lynchings which had occurred recently in the South, such as the Moore’s Ford quadruple lynching in Georgia and the Willie Earle lynching in South Carolina. Additionally, TSTR displayed several graphs indicating lynching incidence rates. One compared the number of whites lynched versus African Americans lynched, while another indicated the number of lynchings in the 48 United States between 1882-1945. These graphical depictions clearly indicated that African Americans suffered the crime of lynching much more than did whites, and the data showed clearly that the southern states had a much higher incidence of lynching than other areas of the country. Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas shared the dubious distinction of having more than 300 lynchings occur in their respective states between 1882 and 1945.\textsuperscript{73} Rivers focused his attention on this damaging and incriminating information, which he felt clearly overshadowed the brief concessionary language inserted by the PCCR staff on the overall details of lynching.

Furthermore, Rivers voiced his great displeasure at Truman’s call for federal anti-lynching legislation, the abolishment of poll tax in the seven states where it was still practiced, and “stronger statutory protection of the right to vote,”\textsuperscript{74} accusing Truman of courting the “Ne-
gro vote of the North.” He further criticized To Secure These Rights, which he sarcastically referred to as “President Truman’s masterpiece” for ignoring heinous crimes occurring elsewhere in the country while unjustly singling out the South for criticism. Convinced that the report unfairly targeted the South, his closing statement threatened the split in the Democratic party, “[T]he 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.” Sentiments such as these from Rivers seemed to validate the fears that Tilly had shared with the PCCR’s chair Wilson and Executive Director Carr in the letter she wrote in September 1947 that the report, even in its draft form, was too critical of the South.

Congressman Ed Lee Gossett of Texas also weighed in against Truman’s Civil Rights message to Congress, admitting that he was “saddened and disheartened by the President’s message of yesterday.” Rather than blaming Truman, he stated that the “electoral-college system of choosing Presidents” was flawed for the undemocratic way elections had been shanghaied by special interests, minorities, and the two controlling political machines - the one in Chicago and the one in New York. In a dramatic description that offered a different solution, he suggested that “Both parties get down on their bellies and crawl in the dirt and kiss the feet of the organized minorities in the big pivotal states. The only way we are going to be absolved from this ignominious procedure is to abolish the archaic system under which we elect Presidents.” Gossett decried the treatment the South had received. He claimed that it had “been used as a whipping boy by both parties” and had been “kicked around by the Democratic National Committee and also by our friends, the Republicans.” Ultimately, Gossett accused Truman of “succumbing” to the evils of the system and encouraged Congress to pass the Judiciary Committee’s recommen-

---

75 80 Cong. Rec., p. 975-976, (1948).
76 Letter from Mrs. M.E. Tilly to Mr. C. E. Wilson and Mr. Robt. Carr, September 8, 1947, Microfilm # 1729, Reel 3, PCCR Papers, Emory University. For more of Tilly’s comments about the TSTR draft, see Chapter 2.
dation to “abolish the electoral college” in order to end the practice whereby presidents pander “to the minorities… for the sake of votes.”

Four of the most damning statements made against Truman, the PCCR, and TSTR came from the Deep South as the Mississippi politicians addressed their colleagues. All four who spoke threatened a split in the Democratic Party, while two railed against the threat to end segregation, two accused Truman of courting Communism, and two actually threatened violence if the assault against the white South’s established order was not squelched.

Arch segregationist Mississippi Senator John Rankin asserted that “Harry Truman never had a better friend in this House than I have been, but that message of yesterday was the most discouraging thing I have ever heard read.” In his remarks Rankin wondered aloud why the country would spend so much money fighting Communism on the international front when the “President of the United States, under some pressure we cannot understand, comes in with that message and tries to ram the platform of the Communist Party down the throats of the people of the United States?” In his statement, Rankin indirectly accused the members of the PCCR of being Communists. Rankin then urged the South to “take care of ourselves” by “elect[ing] independent electors throughout the South…then let those electors decide who shall be President.” He believed that this would “put a stop to these smearing Communists who creep into every bureau and every commission that is appointed and attempt to undermine and destroy everything our people have fought for and everything we hold dear.”

Rankin’s colleague and fellow Mississippian, Williams, also denounced Truman and his message. Williams’ diatribe revealed that these politicians were only concerned with the white

---

South. He depicted his native South as a victim which he must defend against the federal government, declaring “I also rise to protest this thing that the President is doing to the South.” Williams interpreted Truman’s actions as a failure to appreciate the South’s contributions to the party when he stated “If it were not for southern Democrats, Henry Wallace would be in the White House today instead of Harry Truman. Southern Democrats have always been the best friends that President Truman or the Democratic Party ever had. May I say, Mr. Speaker, that this is a mighty poor way for him to evince his gratitude.” Williams concluded by claiming that he would rather see Truman lose the southern Democrats’ support than have the party “win an empty victory by stabbing its friends in the back.”

Another member of the House from Mississippi, Jamie Lloyd Whitten, also an arch racist, spoke out even more forcefully than Rankin. He used threatening language similar to that used by Mississippi’s governor, Fielding Wright, in his January 1948 gubernatorial inaugural speech, in which he “served notice on the leaders of the National Democratic Party that in view of their efforts to pass measures aimed at the South they had better stop, look, and listen, if they hoped to have the unqualified support of the South.” From Truman’s speech, Whitten concluded that “This we have been urging for some time to no avail. Party leaders will not learn. The President’s message yesterday shows that these party leaders have neither stopped, looked, nor listened.” Whitten then declared Truman’s “action of yesterday is deplored. I believe his advisers have led him to make a serious mistake. There can be no question that such message comes as a result of the charges of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Communist Party, and various radical agitators, leveled against us in the South.”

---

sage, he continued, “presumes that such charges are well founded, it takes for granted that Ne-
groes are mistreated in the South. Such is not the truth.”

Whitten pointed the accusatory finger not only at Truman and the NAACP, but also the
PCCR:

…the President says his recommendations follow that of his Committee
which he appointed. The recommendations are the same but the President
knew or should have known what his committee would bring in, for 8 of
the 15 members of that committee are members of racial minorities in this
country, and of the other 7, several are well known for their charges against the
South. That kind of group started out to do just what the President has lent his
aid to doing.81

He then threatened “unrest and trouble” if the civil rights recommendations were passed.
Then, pandering to the basic fear of white supremacists, he charged that “Negro organizations”
wanted “amalgamation of the races; they want to break down segregation; they do not want
equal treatment but want social intermingling – which they believe would follow the passage of
such measures.”82

Whitten ended his statement with another threat, alluding to a fracture in the Democratic
Party that would ensure that Truman’s defeat in the next presidential election, “Today more and
more southern Democrats are seeking ways and means of correcting the present intolerable situ-
tion which threatens not only the South but also our great Nation. The President’s message will
tend to speed up that hunt for a way to save the South and the Nation.”83 Survival of the South -
the white South - was the crucial issue for Whitten, and the way to secure it was to get rid of
Truman and squash the entire effort of civil rights and the push toward ending segregation.

80 Cong. Rec., p. 976-977 (Statement of Congressman Jamie Lloyd Whitten, Daily ed., February 3,
1948) Georgia State University Law Library, Atlanta, Georgia.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
The *Macon Telegraph* reported on February 10, 1948 that Senator James Eastland from Mississippi vehemently opposed “President Truman’s civil rights proposals” stating that Truman’s “proposals on racial segregation and antidiscrimination would ‘degrade, mongrelize and destroy the South.’” Eastland’s lengthy speech given the day before also mentioned the southern governor’s conference and the Committee that Strom Thurmond was heading to “recommend a policy to protect the dignity of the South, the rights of the States, and the social institutions of that great area.” 84 Eastland then drew a line in the proverbial sand and threatened political mutiny when he said,

I hope that this committee’s recommendations will not be for further appeasement and vacillation. I hope that their recommendations will not mark another milestone in the destruction of southern institutions. Through recent years the South has retreated step by step until now it is spurned from the throne which we ourselves have created. Southern people do not desire to leave the Democratic Party. We want to continue in the future as we have in the past. However, we of the South must take whatever political steps are necessary to prevent our social institutions from being destroyed by the force and power of a Government which threatens through the FBI and the Department of Justice, in true Gestapo style, to go further than was done even in reconstruction days.” 85

Eastland’s words essentially echoed the others’ rallying call to the white South against the federal government’s intervention. Eighty years after Reconstruction, there was, according to Eastland, no desire for ANY improvements for blacks in the South. Eastland’s reference to Radical Reconstruction as a very painful period for the South honored not only his family’s past, but also his regional and racial identity as he described his ancestors who “wore the gray” and who “shed blood for the southern cause.” He continued, “Both of my grandfathers, and all my

85 Ibid.
relatives did their part in throwing off the yoke of carpetbagger reconstruction and in setting up the present South with all that the name implies. I am proud of the part they played.”

Eastland perceived the civil rights advances as attacks against the South and accused Truman of using civil rights for his own political advancement, at a great cost to the white South. Confronting Truman, he threatened dire consequences for the South if Truman continued his promotion and support of civil rights: “No, Mr. President, we cannot play politics with southern institutions. We cannot, if we can help it, permit our party or any other political organization to follow a course that will result in tragedy for the South. It is evident that the present policies of the Democratic Party now lead to this end.”

Eastland’s invocation of Reconstruction imagery was also a very deliberate tactic, because he wanted his audience to draw the parallels between the allegedly corrupt, overbearing, and draconian government under Radical Reconstruction and Truman’s civil right advances. Eastland understood that this language would evoke the emotion associated with Reconstruction – fear, anger, mistrust, and hatred of the federal government, and thus it would win support against Truman’s civil rights push. As if to further distance his position from the federal government, Eastland compared the issues facing the South with those that John C. Calhoun faced decades prior – that of States’ Rights and the imposition of the federal government in the South’s business prior to the Civil War. Eastland argued that his thoughts were shared with other deeply influential southerners, and the North did not understand how far the white South would go to prevent this assault.

86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
89 80 Cong. Rec, p. 1194-1195 (1948).
Eastland continued railing against the PCCR and its recommendations, calling TSTR “the crowning effort of northern radicals to put over their anti-southern legislation….,” that had “become the Bible of the radical movement in the United States.” He cited as the “crux of the Committee’s report” its recommendation for “total elimination from American life of segregation based on race, color, creed, or national origin.” Eastland criticized Tilly and Graham by inferring that the Committee was stacked against the segregationists when he said that “the southern people who were to be so vitally affected by the President’s so-called Civil Rights Committee were denied representation on the committee, except for two persons who had already by former action committed themselves to the course which they were expected to pursue.”

Eastland’s threatening overtones continued as he continued to invoke Civil War rhetoric, urging, “[D]o not blindly follow one party. Put ourselves in a trading position. Be sought after, instead of despised.” Again, referencing Calhoun, he instructed the white South to go back to the Constitution, as Calhoun advised, when in 1851, with similar conditions, which he outlined, he predicted that the only thing that could save the Union and could save the South would be independent Presidential electors. A reading of Calhoun’s words describing the conditions then prevailing will make any southern Senator think. He predicted the Civil War…. Mr. President, southern Senators and southern leaders can read Mr. Calhoun’s words with great profit.”

Eastland then closed his argument with a plea to the Democratic Party leadership and also a call to action for white southerners:

Mr. President, these are questions which must be decided alone by the people of the South. I hope our political leaders do not stand between southern people and a clear analysis of their problem. If the South loses, the people, not the politicians, will pay the penalty.

---

90 Ibid., p.1196.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
I hope our politics and patronage do not destroy our people, their culture and traditions. I hope we can hand down our institutions pure and undefiled to our children and our children’s children. This is a question for southern statesmanship. With a firm leadership we can accomplish our salvation.

I know, Mr. President, the movement to carry out this program must come from the people. There must be a grass roots organization in every hamlet of the South. The people must be informed of the dangers involved and of the results if the South is crushed. This all-southern organization must be pushed. There must be mass meetings. The people are ready. The South can be saved.93

Eastland practically channeled John C. Calhoun in this speech as he portrayed himself as the bellwether in this over 100-year old struggle against rights for blacks and for continuation of white supremacy in the South. His message was intended as a rallying cry and a call to action across the South for a massive grassroots uprising against the recent and seemingly unrelenting attacks against white supremacy and segregation from the federal government. Eastland’s speech overtly threatened massive resistance. That threat, coupled with the resurrection of the States’ Rights argument, foreshadowed the rise of all-white segregationist groups, particularly the Citizens Councils which formed after the *Brown* decision in 1954 and the federal intervention to push for desegregation of southern public schools following the 1955 *Brown II* decision.

Five months later, in July 1948, during the National Democratic Convention, the Democrats adopted an ambitious civil rights platform, thanks largely to United States Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. The atmosphere in the convention hall was “pandemonium” following Humphrey’s speech.94 The adoption of this platform became the proverbial final straw for some Deep South politicians. Alabama’s delegation as well as Mississippi’s delegation left the convention since neither was prepared to endorse a candidate that supported the strong civil rights

---

93 Ibid., pp. 1197-1198.
platform that had been adopted.\textsuperscript{95} As if to add insult to injury, shortly after the convention Truman continued his civil rights push by desegregating the Armed Forces via Executive Order.\textsuperscript{96}

The events of July 1948 proved to Truman’s detractors that the push for civil rights was not a trivial pursuit; rather, it had become an ongoing and escalating onslaught since Truman’s PCCR issued \textit{To Secure These Rights}. With resistance building and reaction that proved just as relentless, those who would secede from the party to form the States Rights Party (also known as the Dixiecrats) took the first step by walking out of the convention.\textsuperscript{97} Their actions culminated in the fracture of the Democratic Party in the summer of 1948. This fissure, whose roots can be linked directly to the publication of \textit{To Secure These Rights}, was a critical turning point in southern politics because it foreshadowed the two-party South, which emerged in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{98} Strom Thurmond, who would be the presidential candidate for the States Rights party, ran a campaign against Truman that was overtly racist but ultimately unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{99}

The race-baiting political campaigns that began to characterize southern politics from this point and through the decades of the classic civil rights movement are, therefore, directly attributable to the PCCR and its recommendations in \textit{TSTR}. Ironically, the white southerner, Frank Graham, who wrote the minority dissent opinion on the matter of segregation in education in \textit{TSTR}, would be one of the first victims of this new increasingly entrenched political backlash.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{96} Leuchtenburg, p. 206.
\textsuperscript{97} Frederickson, pp. 130-131.
\textsuperscript{98} For more on the 1948 split of the Democratic Party and the rise of the two party South, see Frederickson.
4.6 The Brief Career of Senator Frank Porter Graham

Within two weeks of the PCCR’s concluding meeting in September 1947, Graham was traveling abroad in Indonesia. Truman had appointed him as the United States’ Representative on the Good Offices Committee of the Security Council of the United Nations in order to help settle the issues in Indonesia between native Indonesians and the Dutch. He was gone for about two months and did not return until December. Therefore, Graham was out of the country when TSTR was originally published. While the initial protests from southern segregationists had subsided by December 1947, after the turn of the year they began to heat up again, beginning with Truman’s State of the Union Address and escalating after his Civil Rights message on February 2nd.

By the time of the one-year anniversary in 1948 of the PCCR publishing TSTR, the Democratic Party had witnessed a split, the Democrats had adopted a national platform that supported civil rights, Truman had issued an executive order that desegregated the military, and certain members of Congress were pushing for civil rights legislation. Two weeks shy of the first anniversary of the publication of TSTR, a writer for TIME magazine accurately described the impact the Committee and its report had on the South when he wrote the PCCR had “dropped a match into the dry and prickly underbrush of Southern pride and fear.”

In February 1948, after Truman’s Civil Rights message to Congress, reactionary southern politicians perceived Graham to be a southern traitor and blamed him and others like him for the civil rights problems now plaguing the South. When Senator O’Daniel from Texas mentioned Graham’s involvement with the PCCR, and claimed that Graham was a member of many Com-

---

100 From Graham’s secretary to Mr. Joseph Facci, November 5, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers; From Hugh B. Hester to Graham, October 20, 1947, Folder 2028 in the Graham Papers.
munist organizations, Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon argued back to defend Graham. Morse had worked with Graham during the war on the War Labor Board and therefore could vouch for Graham’s integrity. North Carolina’s senator Clyde Hoey also supported Graham by exonerating him from the PCCR’s recommendations, because he believed Graham had nothing to do with the recommendations against segregation. He referred to Graham’s and Tilly’s dissent.

In justice to Dr. Graham, I think it should be said that when the Civil Rights committee, of which he is a member, submitted its report, the statement was made that several members of the Committee did not agree to many of the recommendations made in that report. Dr. Graham’s friends know that he was among those who dissented from the extreme statements and recommendations by the Committee. All who are acquainted with him would know that he does not approve, and would not support, the broadside assault contained in this report on the practices and customs of the South with reference to segregation. Certainly, the Committee, in making its report, should have indicated the names of the members who dissented from the extremely prejudicial and unwise statements and recommendations contained in the report.

Despite Hoey’s remarks, Frank Graham’s dissent on the PCCR, described by Charles Luckman during the Committee debates as a “gracious out,” would not help him during a bitter, race-baiting senatorial primary campaign less than two years later. When that primary was over, Graham would be defeated and become the second casualty (after Senator Claude Pepper’s defeat in the Florida primary) of the conservative political backlash that ensued with southern politicians’ universal vilification of the PCCR and denouncement of TSTR.

---

103 80 Cong. Rec., p. 1166 (Statement of Senator Clyde Hoey, Daily ed., February 9, 1948) Georgia State University Law Library, Atlanta, Georgia.
104 See Warren Ashby, *Frank Porter Graham: A Southern Liberal*, (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: J.P. Blair Publisher, 1980), pp. 273-274. Claude Pepper was the first casualty in that he lost his senate primary race in Florida due to his socialist ties. But both Graham and Pepper were associated with Truman. See also Linda Reed, *Simple Decency and Common Sense: The Southern Conference Movement, 1938-1963*, (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 132. Reed argues that “the defeat of Graham and Pepper forewarned that liberalism was in for a great wave of resistance in the next decade.”
In March, 1949 James Melville Broughton, United States Senator from North Carolina, died unexpectedly and the governor of North Carolina, W. Kerr Scott, in a surprise move named Frank Graham to fill the vacant seat. Scott held a relatively moderate opinion on matters of race and had consulted with many about this appointment before selecting Graham. It did, however, take some coaxing to get Graham to commit, and he did so only after his friends convinced him that taking the junior Senator seat was his duty.

Graham’s track record while in the Senate indicated that he did not unilaterally vote for liberal causes. While he did favor anti-lynching legislation, he was opposed to a federally-mandated FEPC at the state level. His opposition was not grounded in the principles of the FEPC, but rather because he interpreted the move as imposing the federal government on the states. In a position that resembled his perspective on segregation and education, Graham stressed that giving people the proper information and education to get them prepared for this type of change would ultimately make the transition voluntary and enduring. Forcing an FEPC would result in resistance and the further continuation of the undesired practices.

By the end of 1949, Graham was encouraged to continue in his role as Senator and ran in the primary to secure the nomination for the Democratic ticket. The date for the primary was May 27, 1950, and it was a three-way race with Graham and two opponents, Willis Smith and Robert Reynolds (a former Senator). Graham’s balanced track record in the Senate notwithstanding, his opponent’s campaigns against him were characterized by smears against his character due mainly to his participation on the PCCR, his position with respect to civil rights and race relations, and his association with organizations accused of being Communist fronts.

105 Snider, p. 234.
106 Ibid.
Graham responded to these questions calmly, logically, and thoroughly. In one statement devoted entirely to his stance on civil rights, Graham explained that after the PCCR meetings had concluded, he had traveled back to Washington to write a statement of his philosophy regarding race relations, which became the general statement of dissent within the report. He also reiterated that his approach to solving the race issues was “through religion and education.” Not surprisingly, one of his opponents, Willis Smith, claimed that no such dissenting opinion existed.

Perhaps the most extreme example of Smith’s race-baiting campaign was a flier which stated in bold capital letters “WHITE PEOPLE WAKE UP.” In this flier, whites were told to wake up “Before it is too late” and asked whether or not they wanted “Negroes...” working alongside them or teaching their children. The flier also charged that “FRANK GRAHAM FAVORS MINGLING OF THE RACES... He says so in the report he signed (For proof of this see p. 167, Civil Rights Report).”

In yet another flier, the Smith campaign declared its delight with the defeat of Claude Pepper, a liberal who had lost his primary race for re-election to the United States Senate from Florida. The Smith campaign claimed Pepper’s defeat as a victory over Truman’s Fair Deal Socialism. In that same flier, Smith’s campaign indicated the next target was to be Graham, with the ultimate goal of defeating Truman in 1952. The flier’s message was urgent, “1950 is a critical year!! The foundations for Truman defeat in 1952 MUST BE LAID NOW!!” The flier also contained yet another reference to Graham’s work on the PCCR, “Frank Graham was a member of Harry Truman’s notorious CIVIL RIGHTS committee, which recommended the passage of the iniquitous FEPC (Fair Employment Practices) law which would permit the GOVERN-

---

Although Graham did not support a federally-mandated FEPC at the state level, this flier illustrates how Graham was targeted as part of the southern conservative political backlash, rooted in racial rhetoric and calls for individual rights, all of which had been brewing since the publication of *TSTR*.

During the initial campaign, the Smith camp attacked Graham vociferously on the FEPC issue. Another flier devoted to the FEPC matter provided inaccurate examples contrasting the current hiring practices of employers prior to the FEPC, and how restrictive and unfair hiring practices would be like under the auspices of the FEPC:

1. A White man and a negro [sic] ask for the same job. The employer would, prior to the F.E.P.C., feel free to select the white man. After F.E.P.C., the employer could be forced to hire the negro and not the white man by a Federal Commission probably largely composed of Yankees.

2. If an employer had to fire one man – and he let go a negro, the F.E.P.C. machinery could force him to take the negro back on, with back pay from the time he was fired, that is if the Yankee Gestapo said he fired the negro on account of color or race.

To counter this, Graham’s campaign issued a press release on April 8, 1950 stressing again his opposition to a federally mandated FEPC, stating “I am for the principles of fair employment, but I am against coercion and the compulsory power of the federal government in the FEPC bill.” Graham’s sentiment on this matter ran true to his southern liberal beliefs. Since his Senate record and his own word was seemingly not enough to counter his opponents, he turned to a third party to confirm his position against a federal FEPC. Graham’s campaign solicited a statement from former PCCR member Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. Roosevelt, who was at

---

the time a member of the House of Representatives from New York, unequivocally stated that Graham was opposed to the PCCR’s recommendations regarding FEPC. While some thought the statement would resolve the matter, it did not. 114 The *Greensboro Daily News* ran an editorial condemning Graham’s campaign for bringing in “outsiders” to settle North Carolina’s affairs, and Smith’s campaign used this article in yet another piece of campaign collateral against Graham. 115

Smith also attacked Graham on the basis that he opposed segregation in Washington, D.C., when in actuality what Graham had supported was home rule for residents of Washington, D.C. A bill put forth for home rule in the nation’s capital was amended by Senator James Eastland of Mississippi, who “tacked on a proposed amendment directing that a vote on segregation be called in the District.”116 Since Graham believed this amendment threatened the entire basis of the original bill, which was *home rule*, he felt he could no longer support it. 117

Although Graham won more votes than either opponent in the initial primary election, he did not get the majority of votes necessary to win. The second place vote-getter in the race, Willis Smith, initially considered conceding the race to Graham until his campaign advisors, among them Jesse Helms, forced Graham into a runoff. 118 Smith was a “conservative Democrat” and a corporate lawyer from Raleigh, North Carolina. He was a relative unknown, having been out of politics for nineteen years. 119 In the runoff campaign, Smith again utilized smear tactics against

---

116 MEMO TO LOCAL CAMPAIGN MANAGERS, May 18, 1950, Folder 5034 in the Graham Papers.
117 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
Graham, distorting the facts regarding Graham’s beliefs about race relations and his ties to organizations that were Communist fronts. Smith’s campaign was indicative of the ability of white supremacists, even in relatively moderate states like North Carolina, to rally people against any sort of progress in race relations, perceived or real in the post-PCCR South.

Smith’s decision to force a runoff may have also been influenced by three recent United States Supreme Court decisions that were handed down on June 5, 1950, two days before Smith’s campaign chose a run-off.\textsuperscript{120} Two of the three cases were \textit{Sweatt v. Painter} and \textit{McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents}, in which the court ruled in favor of desegregation in professional and graduate education. In the third case, \textit{Henderson v. United States}, the court made it unconstitutional for railroads to segregate dining cars.\textsuperscript{121} Senator Clyde Hoey’s reaction to these decisions was anger toward the court. Yet Graham’s reaction was calm and deliberate, reiterating his ideas to ensure a voluntary and enduring integration that would be achieved over time through religion and education and not something forced by the federal government. Smith’s campaign took full advantage of Graham’s composed reaction to these decisions. By not coming out against these decisions, Smith’s campaign accused Graham of supporting them, which meant that Graham supported the federal government’s continued attack against segregation.

A primary runoff election was scheduled for June 24, 1950. The Smith camp ran this second campaign almost solely on the race issue and, to a lesser extent, also introduced the Communist tactic against Graham accusing him of Socialism.\textsuperscript{122} Once again, Smith resurrected the PCCR connection by reminding voters that Graham was part of the Committee that issued recommendations such as the abolition of segregation. To further denigrate Graham as complicit in

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p. 47 and Ashby, p. 264.
\textsuperscript{121} Gentry, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{122} From Gilbert Peel to C. A. Upchurch, June 19, 1950, Folder 5039 in the Graham Papers. See also Gentry, p. 47; Ashby, p. 268.
this egregious action, Smith’s campaign dug up a two-and-a-half year old North Carolina newspaper article from the *Goldsboro News-Argus*, which had run immediately after the publication of the PCCR’s report in October 1947. It was entitled “End of Racial Segregation is Proposed: Civil Rights Committee Would Revise Several Laws.” Below the article, the campaign flier continued, “WE WILL NOT VOTE FOR YOU FRANK GRAHAM, WE WILL VOTE FOR WIL- LIS SMITH FOR U.S. SENATE, JUNE 24, 1950.”

In this run off campaign, rooted mainly in racial rhetoric, Smith defeated Graham by a landslide, with twenty thousand more votes, and became the Democratic candidate for United States Senator from North Carolina. Smith went on to win the Senate seat in November. After his defeat, a brokenhearted Graham returned to the Senate to complete his term.

On Graham’s penultimate day in the Senate, he introduced one last statement for the record - his support for the bills that would make Alaska and Hawaii states, which was a recommendation from the PCCR three years prior. On his last day in the Senate, Graham provided his farewell statement in which he explained his lifelong dedication to helping further the cause of human rights, and indicated the critical need for a strong and United States-supported United Nations. In 1951, Graham accepted a position with the United Nations as the “representative for India and Pakistan in the dispute over the Kashmir region.” Graham continued in this po-

---

123 Campaign flier from Willis Smith campaign using article from *Goldsboro News-Argus*, Folder 5037 in the Graham Papers.
124 Gilmore, p. 425. Gilmore argues that “The defeat broke Graham’s heart and ended his lifelong love affair with North Carolina’s people.”
125 Statehood for Hawaii and Alaska; Extension of Remarks of Hon. Frank P. Graham of North Carolina in the Senate of the United States September 21, 1950 (legislative day of July 20, 1950), Folder 3544 in the Graham Papers.
127 Gentry, pp. 33-60; Pleasants and Burns, pp. 277-279.
sition until 1970, and for part of his tenure with the United Nations chaired the United Nations Speakers Bureau. ¹²⁸

While he served as President of the University of North Carolina and on many commissions and boards, Graham built his reputation as a southern liberal. Once in office, Graham’s potential as a southern liberal became far more threatening to more conservative politicians, because Graham had been a member of the PCCR and this Committee had attacked the southern way of life in 1947, with a follow-up by Truman in 1948. Conservative white southerners were desperately trying to cling to a way of life that Truman and his PCCR were trying to dismantle. They saw Graham as inextricably linked with Truman’s civil rights push. Graham therefore became the person to defeat in an effort to halt the progress being made on the civil rights frontier as recommended by the PCCR and Truman. Truman’s political destruction was the ultimate goal of these southern Democrats, and Graham’s defeat was seen as a critical milestone in that effort. Graham’s 1950 Senate primary race thus became illustrative of the fundamental race relations issue – that white racist attitudes were deeply rooted and very resistant to change, so Graham became an early casualty in a growing conservative political backlash that was rooted in racial rhetoric.

The results of the racially charged 1950 Democratic Primary in North Carolina contrasted sharply with the results of the race-baiting presidential campaign of Strom Thurmond against Harry Truman two years earlier. During that election, voters in the moderate state of North Carolina supported Truman and not the more reactionary Dixiecrats. ¹²⁹ Yet only two years later, Graham was defeated at the state-level primary in North Carolina by a reactionary white supremacist opponent, whose campaign discredited Graham’s moderate record in the Senate. Truman’s

¹²⁸ Ibid.
¹²⁹ For more about southern politics and voting, see V.O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949).
support from North Carolina in the 1948 presidential election and Graham’s defeat in the 1950 Senate primary election demonstrate how, during this two-year window, politics had narrowed markedly, becoming single-issue driven even in more moderate states like North Carolina.

4.7 Graham and United States Civil Rights

Frank Graham’s work in the United Nations meant that after he lost his primary bid for the Democratic nomination for United States Senate, he did not work in the South during the classical phase of the civil rights movement, or ever again.\textsuperscript{130} Graham worked mainly on the world stage of human rights, and yet he never lost sight of the United States’ own human rights movement and its subset, the modern civil rights movement. During times of crises in America’s civil rights movement, Graham offered his advice and opinions on how the United States civil rights struggle played out against the “world neighborhood,” thereby providing his audiences a unique perspective of the civil rights struggle in the United States as part of the larger human rights struggle evidenced in many developing nations around the world.

In the post-PCCR years, the southern states continued to oppose integration. Graham hoped that the churches might provide leadership in this area, but they did not. Seven years after the PCCR stated unequivocally that segregation had no place in American life, and further recommended sanctions for segregated schools with respect to federal grants in aid, the South still had not voluntarily moved any closer to eliminating segregation in public schools. In 1954 when the United States Supreme Court handed down its landmark Brown decision, southern liberals like Graham saw their role as one to rally the churches and other more liberally minded

people to help guide acceptance and obedience to the new law of the land. To that end, Graham spoke at length in a Presbyterian Conference held at Montreat, North Carolina in May 1954, just after the *Brown* decision had been finalized.

He began by stating that the Court understood that the South had indeed made gains, despite great odds, since the Civil War. He also asserted that, in the wake of the global crisis of the cold war, the Court’s decision would now force the United States to be the “leader of the free world in actions as well as in words.”\(^\text{131}\) Although the Supreme Court had issued its decision, and Graham also knew that many in the South would continue to resist, he again called upon the churches to help in this time of great need.

Now is the time of the Church’s great opportunity to use its influence and its commitments to the teachings of Jesus so that the decision of the Court will, in the deep South and in the communities of highest potential, result not in an intensification of the problem, but in co-operative adjustments for permanent progress.

Humility in the presence of complex and stubborn problems, soul searching and fasting and prayer, the understanding heart, spiritual communion, and the sense of human brotherhood are deeply needed in this hour. The churches which should have led the way must not now lag behind the states. This is the great responsibility of the churches, under God, and this is the high opportunity of the Church, in the spirit and mission of Jesus, to stand forth and work with understanding, sympathy, and spiritual guidance for the wise acceptance of the law of the land under the Fatherhood of one God in the brotherhood of all people.\(^\text{132}\)

He also called on other southern liberals for their assistance in this critical transitional time.

\[\ldots\text{those who favored the solution of the problem through religious and democratic developments within the states now have the duty and opportunity to work for the acceptance of the decision in good spirit through the increasing}\]

---


\(^{132}\) Statement of a Southern Presbyterian made at Montreat… p. 7.
responsibility of the churches, prophetic with their interpretation of the meaning of brotherhood under God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, and in the rising responsibilities and in the rising responsibilities of the colleges in their authentic interpretation of the American dream unfolding to this hour.\textsuperscript{133}

Then Graham, ever the defender of public education, stated unequivocally to those that would continue to fight for segregated schools that “the Supreme Court did not make any provision for this decision to be nullified. We cannot afford to lose our public schools. This is the way to preserve our public school system.”\textsuperscript{134}

In the late 1950s, many activists in the civil rights movement focused on securing voting rights for minorities. Graham spoke in favor of this effort when he addressed the United Nations Chautauqua Conference in August 1957 urging:

(1) the development of southern people of the sense of obligation to prepare all their children, including Negro children, for full citizenship and
(2) the faithful way in which Negro youth have prepared themselves for full citizenship including the right to vote as the fundamental right in a democracy on which other rights so largely depend.

His comments were entered into the Senate record by John Sherman Cooper, Senator from Kentucky.\textsuperscript{135}

Later that year, Graham sent a statement to the State Commission Against Discrimination about the ongoing crisis across the South regarding desegregation of public schools, referencing his experience as a member of the PCCR:

As one member of the [President’s] Committee [on Civil Rights] who thought that the wisest approach to the enduring solution of the problem of the races was through the influence of religion and education vigorously at work in the minds and hearts of the people within the States, I have said

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{135} 85 Cong. Rec. (Statement of Senator John Sherman Cooper, who asked that Graham’s remarks from his Chautauqua speech of August 14, 1957, be added to the record., August 30, 1957), Georgia State University Law Library, Atlanta, Georgia.}
in many Southern States that, in view of the local lags and global perils, the Supreme Court had no other alternative to making a fresh interpretation of the meaning of equal freedom and equal protection of the laws for all citizens of all the States as citizens of the United States. Whatever have been our past differences, now is the time, when democratic unity is impaired in America and freedom is imperiled in the world, for all Americans to unite in support of two basic propositions: obedience to the law of the land as interpreted by the Supreme Court, the bulwark of our liberties; and preservation and strengthening of the schools of the people as the source of equal opportunity and progress in a free society.  

4.8 Conclusion

Frank Graham was one of the most thoughtful liberal minds of his time. He was able to accomplish much while safely ensconced as the president of the University of North Carolina. His involvement in progressive and liberal organizations afforded him the opportunity to share his liberal ideals and influence with those who would listen. This type of volunteer work did not detract from the University’s reputation. Once Graham entered the national discourse of race relations, he not only enlarged his scope of influence, but also exposed himself to an increasingly entrenched opposition to social change. Graham became more of a threat to the white supremacist order in the South due to his membership on the PCCR. Two years later, as a junior Senator from North Carolina, he was perceived as even more dangerous, because his actions as a Senator and one who had been in favor of improved race relations and rights for minorities, would affect so many more people beyond just the university.

The PCCR backlash was characterized by racial rhetoric that caught up with Graham in the spring of 1950, two and a half years after the PCCR issued its report. Although Graham continued true to his beliefs that voluntary integration would come with education and religious teachings and he dissented in the PCCR’s report with respect to its recommendation to end seg-

---

136 Graham’s statement to the State Commission Against Discrimination, December 12, 1957, Folder 4583 in the Graham Papers.
regation in public schools, the PCCR experience and its groundbreaking report haunted him as he moved further into the political arena as a United States Senator.

In 1963, Dorothy Tilly persuaded her church, Haygood Memorial Methodist Church in Atlanta, to sponsor one of the Annual Associations of United Nations meetings and to permit Frank Graham to be the keynote speaker. Leslie Dunbar, who was at the time the executive director of the Southern Regional Council, picked up Graham at the Atlanta airport and drove him to his hotel. The two conversed about the upcoming event, and Graham voiced his excitement about seeing Tilly again and also seeing their mutual friend and colleague Benjamin E. Mays, current president of Morehouse College, whom Graham expected to be at any event organized by Tilly. What Graham did not realize was that Tilly could not invite Benjamin Mays to her church was still segregated. Graham discovered that not only would Mays be absent but that Tilly had not invited him. Dunbar spent the rest of the evening “mediating between these two extraordinary people.”

Graham had not lived in the South for almost fifteen years, and although there had been gains in the South with respect to integration, there were many places in which the progress lagged. Graham also knew that Tilly was someone who did not at all agree with segregation, and so he understandably thought that she would have invited Mays to the meeting. Tilly, like Graham, did not believe in forcing integration so she worked within organizations to eventually accept African Americans. In the case of her church, Tilly was still trying to bring it forward. Dunbar’s vignette demonstrates that the strategy that Graham and Tilly had espoused for eventu-

---

al, meaningful, and enduring integration was still employed by Tilly sixteen years after the
PCCR disbanded.

Graham and Tilly are emblematic of the gendered experience of white southern human
relations activists. In the South, white women could more successfully work in human relations
because those efforts could be perceived as charity work and something that women did without
upsetting the social status quo. Very few whites would feel threatened by white women’s work
in human relations. However, a white man working within the public sphere for African Amer-
cans’ rights was a far different story. Men who worked publicly to improve the lives of southern
African Americans often jeopardized their jobs and their social club memberships. Graham was
the proverbial white male activist who, while within the confines of the university, could work
fairly safely in southern human relations, though with considerable criticism. Once he entered
the national discourse on race relations as a political appointee on federal committees, he faced
increased opposition to his beliefs and activism from a wider audience. As a United States Sena-
tor, Graham was seen by white supremacists as one of Truman’s civil rights henchmen and, in
the South, as having an affiliation with the PCCR report. That was tantamount to treason. Gra-
ham’s career in the Senate, therefore, threatened the South’s social order, and conservative
southern Democrats in North Carolina ensured Graham’s political career would be short-lived.
Following his defeat in the Senate primary, he left the South for the remainder of his career,
while Tilly, a white woman, continued her work in southern human relations until illness forced
her retirement in 1968.

As Graham’s experience illustrates, by 1950s the southern political landscape at the state
level had narrowed to the point of being driven almost solely on issues of race, so that even
moderates like Graham did not stand a chance. Moreover, Graham’s defeat and the political
fallout from the PCCR illustrate that federal intervention at the state level with respect to civil rights was required for any real improvement in race relations.
CHAPTER 5: SEEDTIME FOR MASSIVE RESISTANCE

The general public of the south is often spoken of by Southern liberals as hopelessly backward, but at the same time it is flattered in the most extravagant terms of regional mythology. It is made a main point that the Southern public must not be enraged into resistance.

Gunnar Myrdal

5.1 Introduction

On October 29, 1947, the PCCR stated unequivocally in To Secure These Rights:

V. To strengthen the right to equality of opportunity, the President’s Committee recommends:

1. In general:
The elimination of segregation, based on race, color, creed, or national origin, from American life.
The separate but equal doctrine has failed in three important respects. First, it is inconsistent with the fundamental equalitarianism of the American way of life in that it marks groups with the brand of inferior status. Secondly, where it has been followed, the results have been separate and unequal facilities for minority peoples. Finally, it has kept people apart despite incontrovertible evidence that an environment favorable to civil rights is fostered whenever groups are permitted to live and work together. There is no adequate defense of segregation.

Within days of To Secure These Rights’ (TSTR) release, a multiracial group composed of whites and African Americans staged a sit-in protest at the segregated restaurant in Washington, D.C.’s Greyhound Bus terminal. When the restaurant denied service to the African Americans in the group, their white colleagues refused to receive service until and unless all in their group

---

1 In naming this chapter “Seedtime for Massive Resistance,” I pay homage to Dr. Merl E. Reed, professor emeritus of Georgia State University whose groundbreaking work on the FEPC is entitled, Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement: the President’s Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 1941-1946, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991).


were served. Although the restaurant’s owner tried to force the “sit-downers” to leave by pouring bottles of ammonia onto the tables “and spraying the restaurant with DDT,” they refused to leave. Eventually the owner closed the restaurant, and the protesters departed the establishment at approximately 1:00 a.m. Upon leaving the restaurant one white protester, Lynn Seitter, “was thrown to the pavement by a white sailor who darted out of the crowd” that had gathered outside the restaurant. The reporter from the Atlanta Daily World covering this story identified the protesters as probably being members of the interracial activist organization, Committee of Racial Equality (CORE).

This early sit-in is indeed emblematic of the hope and courage the PCCR and TSTR inspired in some African Americans and liberal whites. It also demonstrates the preparedness of interracial organizations such as CORE, whose members had already been testing the Supreme Court’s ruling in Irene Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia, which declared segregation unconstitutional in interstate transportation. CORE activists were poised to act at this most opportune moment and illustrated that blacks and whites collaborated in their activism to bring about change.

Conversely, the actions of the restaurateur, the gathering crowd, and the sailor who assailed one of the white activists reveal the immediate and undeniable deep-rooted resistance to the challenge that threatened Jim Crow traditions. The actions of those resisting the protest signify that they were willing to immediately resort to violence, even white-on-white violence, in an attempt to maintain segregation. Superficially, these people reacted against the protest and pro-

---

4 The Committee of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded in 1942 and later changed its name to the Congress of Racial Equality. Information about CORE found in http://www.core-online.org/History/history.htm Journey of Reconciliation; Information about the sit-in in Washington, D.C. is from “Bus Company Asked to Observe Civil Rights,” Atlanta Daily World, November 12, 1947.

5 http://www.core-online.org/History/history.htm; Journey of Reconciliation, In 1947, CORE members began testing the Supreme Court’s ruling on interstate travel, Irene Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia(1946) , which declared segregation in such unconstitutional. This non-violent protest was called the Journey of Reconciliation and was reborn in the 1960s as the Freedom Rides.
testers, but their defensive and then violent reaction may have also been resistance to the recommendations made in TSTR to abolish segregation. The protest provoked an immediate and violent reaction, and it portended the violent resistance that would erupt when school desegregation was ordered by the United States Supreme Court in the mid-1950s.6

This chapter first recalls the white southern resistance to specific federal intervention in race relations from the 1930s into the 1940s and World War Two. This resistance evolved into predictable and foreseen racial tension and violence as the war ended and African American veterans returned to the South in the early post-war era. Indeed these earlier episodes closely resembled the resistance that was evidenced after TSTR was published. For the first time in the nation’s history the federal government, via the PCCR and TSTR, threatened an end to legal segregation with the overt goal of banishing it from American life. That threat, coupled with the escalating civil rights push extending into 1948, impressed upon those that resisted it the seriousness of the threat to segregation. Civil rights activism had morphed from individual battles over race relations issues to a federally-induced directive for civil rights. Detractors threatened violence but their immediate actions were focused on organizing resistance efforts across the region in order to be prepared for a longer and mass-based conflict which would ultimately decide the future of segregation.

The chapter then explores the extremely hostile reaction of the southern press to TSTR and to Truman’s list of PCCR recommendations that he took to Congress in February 1948. The outcry from the press demonstrates how southern newspaper editors and publishers used their newspapers to mobilize white southern opinion against TSTR and against the push for civil rights in general. In doing so, they instigated support for a grass-roots resistance which planted the

---

seeds of massive resistance that took root and emerged seven years later after the Brown decisions. Lastly, the chapter argues that in issuing a death sentence for segregation, the PCCR ensured the premature death of southern liberalism.

5.2 White Resistance and Violence Pre- and Post-TSTR

Just as the civil rights movement witnessed unprecedented gains in the 1940s, so did the reaction against it. Advances in civil rights even as far back as the 1930s had been challenged, and this pattern not only continued but also strengthened in the 1940s. The approach the federal government took to race relations in the 1930s and into the mid-1940s was a piecemeal method - mainly reactive rather than proactive. A useful analogy is one that compares different branches of the federal government that did intervene in matters of race (e.g., the Executive and the Judiciary branches) to medical specialists who focus only on symptoms that they can address rather than fixing the underlying cause(s) of the symptoms. For example, the Executive branch under Roosevelt issued the executive order that created the FEPC in 1941. Roosevelt acted in direct response to the threat of the March on Washington Movement, which would have ostensibly compromised the war effort. Roosevelt did not attempt to address the underlying causes of racial discrimination in the defense industry; he acted in order to thwart any protests that might endanger the war effort. Following Roosevelt’s creation of the FEPC in 1941, Southern Democrats expressed outrage at the potential loss of employment opportunities for whites and the pos-

sibility of integrated workplaces, especially when this directive came from no less than the president of the United States.\(^8\)

Additionally, the Judiciary heard the NAACP, from the 1930s forward, argue skillfully and successfully many cases against discrimination covering voting in the white primary, racial segregation in higher educational institutions, and racial segregation in housing. These cases are examples of how the NAACP, in filing these suits in federal courts, ensured that this branch of the government tackled symptoms of the race relations problem, by hearing cases and ultimately handing down decisions that would chip away steadily against segregation and discrimination in targeted institutions. Certain Supreme Court decisions also unleashed white southern conservatives’ wrath. When the court struck down the all-white primary in the 1944 *Smith v. Allwright* decision, it instigated a stream of cases from southern states, as many tried to skirt the ruling.\(^9\)

While the FEPC and various Supreme Court decisions were significant because they represented an increase in federal intervention with respect to civil rights, they did not represent a full scale assault on segregation, which was the bedrock of southern white supremacy. Furthermore, the resistance against these milestone events, while notable, was not mass-based.

Some federal interventions in civil rights were successful, while other attempts such as getting Congress to pass federal anti-lynching legislation, were not. Resistance in the federal political realm often took the form of filibuster. Theodore G. Bilbo, the infamous inflammatory, race-baiting, white supremacist, senator from Mississippi, who was a self-described lifetime member of the Ku Klux Klan, utilized this method along with other fellow southern Democrat


colleagues in 1938 to kill an anti-lynching bill. Bilbo threatened massive violence on the Senate floor during his attenuated filibuster:

If you succeed in the passage of this bill, you will open the floodgates of hell in the South. Raping, mobbing, lynching, race riots, and crime will be increased a thousand fold; and upon your garments and the garments of those who are responsible for the passage of the measure will be the blood of the raped and outraged daughters of Dixie, as well as the blood of the perpetrators of these crimes that the red-blooded Anglo-Saxon White Southern men will not tolerate.

Bilbo believed that the state and “not the federal government should prohibit lynching” and promised that Christian southern women and “right-thinking” southern men who did not approve of lynching would ensure its demise. Bilbo supported the Negro Nationalist movement, under which Marcus Garvey had endorsed the migration of African Americans to Africa. His rationale for supporting this movement differed from Garvey’s in that Bilbo thought that the removal of African Americans would help solve the country’s race problem. Through the 1930s and 1940s, “as civil rights legislation slowly gained momentum … race became increasingly central to [Bilbo’s] philosophy, and he expressed his supremacist views in a more extreme fashion than most of his fellow southern politicians.”

---

11 Green, pp. 99-100.
12 Ibid.
Bilbo became someone to be eschewed, not admired, and by 1946 many “northern and border state Democrats” no longer wanted to be associated with him, since it could mean the loss of elections and quite possibly “the presidency of the United States,” and he lacked their support when he ran for re-election. World War II’s influence had turned many southern politicians against his extreme brand of racism.

1946 was also the first year of the post-war era in which returning African American veterans expected and deserved better than the second class citizenship they had left behind when they departed for war. The optimism that was fueled by winning a war against racism which should have spelled the end of racism everywhere was short-lived, because during 1946 a spate of lynchings occurred against African American veterans in the South. These acts were counted along with other expressions of extreme racism that year, such as Eugene Talmadge’s last political race for governor in Georgia and the rise of the hate group, the Colombians. The Colombians were the country’s “first postwar Nazi group” who “borrowed their uniforms and insignia from Hitler’s Third Reich.” That year the National Negro Congress blamed both Bilbo and Eugene Talmadge and their extreme brand of “race hatred” for the lynching of four African Americans in Monroe, Georgia.

The assertiveness of returning African American veterans was also evident in Mississippi, where they expected to vote since the state had eliminated the poll tax for all veterans. Additionally, the white primary had also been abolished. Bilbo, with the help of Mississippi newspapers statewide, which printed his inflammatory and race-baiting rhetoric, reached those whites

---

15 Fleegler, p. 19.
16 Ibid.; Green, p. 111.
17 For more on Eugene Talmadge see, for example, William Anderson, The Wild Man from Sugar Creek: the Political Career of Eugene Talmadge, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975).
19 Green, p. 104.
20 Fleegler, pp. 19-20.
who could be worked into a frenzy and form mobs to intimate by threats and deter, by violence if necessary, many of these upstart African Americans who attempted to register to vote. But that did not detract some blacks from voting in the election. Approximately three to four thousand African Americans voted in the election apparently “without incident.” Although Bilbo had become known nationally as a “polarizing figure,” that was not the case within his home state. With the help from journalists who reprinted his incendiary dialogue throughout Mississippi, he won re-election to the Senate handily taking “seventy-six out of eighty-two counties.” This spark of resistance demonstrated that the collusion between firebrand and newspaper could prove extremely powerful and that there was, indeed, an element of the population that was not willing to go along with “[T]he changing attitudes of white elites.” Despite the embarrassment that a man like Bilbo created for America in the wake of World War II and in the nascent Cold War, in the South he was not alone in his reaction against a law that permitted African American voters. His reaction foreshadowed the threats and vitriol that would be heaped upon Truman and southern members of the PCCR within less than a year.

5.3 Resurgence of Klan Activity

Once To Secure These Rights was published, it exposed the harsh realities of a nation that had failed in its promise to secure the civil rights of every American. Never before had the subject of civil rights been examined so thoroughly with the goal of exploring its shortcomings and proposing remedies. In creating the PCCR the federal government, for the first time, approached the race problem holistically. The PCCR’s goal was to determine the root cause of the civil

---

21 Fleegler, p. 20.
23 Fleegler, p. 20.
24 Ibid., p. 4.
rights deficiencies and propose solutions that would solve the problems for the foreseeable future. The PCCR and its overriding recommendation to abolish segregation marked the first time the federal government had put forth a general threat to ending segregation as a way of life. The timing of *TSTR*’s publication also coincided with a decline in postwar idealism, a corresponding apathy toward anti-prejudice and anti-racism movements, an expansion of the reborn Ku Klux Klan, and the formation of other hate groups.

The Klan in Georgia witnessed a renaissance in the post-war years but especially ran “parallel with the renewed dominance of the Talmadge faction.” In Georgia, “the Associated Klans of Georgia reemerged from a wartime low of 12 Klaverns to over 110 Klaverns, with an estimated one hundred thousand members by the summer of 1949.” Additionally, Georgia’s increase in Klan membership occurred while other southern states were witnessing decreasing Klan membership and activity.25

In 1946 the Klan experienced a revival in Georgia under the leadership of Atlanta obstetrician Samuel Green.26 In early December 1947, just weeks after the PCCR published *TSTR*, the *Atlanta Daily World* carried a brief article about a Ku Klux Klan demonstration in Georgia. Grand Dragon Dr. Samuel Green downplayed the event, commenting that it was “‘just one of numerous ceremonies held at various times throughout the State.’”27 The journalist covering the story described it as a “procession of approximately 80 cars parading from Gainesville to Buford…with its participants clothed in full regalia…. and “[H]eaded by an automobile bearing a flaming cross.”28 The article was entitled, “Klan Parade Noted,” indicating perhaps that alt-

28 Ibid.
hough no physical harm had resulted from the parade, the Atlanta Daily World was nonetheless taking note of it and alerting its readership.

The re-emergence and expansion of the Klan in Georgia “translated into renewed racial violence.” In Georgia, by mid-1948, the Southern Regional Council had accounted for “an unprecedented dozen reported attacks in Georgia.” As the 1948 presidential election approached, this violence heightened and focused on deterring blacks from voting. However, African Americans were not the only ones targeted. In one case, white reporters secretly gained access to a Klan initiation near Columbus, Georgia. When they were discovered, Klan members beat them and stabbed them “with hypodermic needles.”

On February 2, 1948, Truman spoke before Congress demanding that it act upon a subset of the PCCR’s civil rights recommendations. The very next day, the Ku Klux Klan held an organized march and cross burning on the lawn of the Emanuel County courthouse in Swainsboro, Georgia. This event made front page news the following day in the Macon Telegraph and also in Jackson, Mississippi’s Clarion-Ledger. Approximately 189 Klansmen participated in this demonstration. Just prior to setting the cross alight, the group’s leader proclaimed, “May we re-dedicate our lives to the protection of white womanhood.” This statement was the familiar refrain of white supremacists who used it to rationalize lynching and segregation. Ed Fain of the Macon Telegraph reported that during the cross burning, Klan members taunted, “Where’s Drew Pearson! Where’s Walter Winchell!” The article explained that both of these radio and newspaper columnists had been focused on exposing the Klan (due in large part to Stetson Kennedy’s

---

29 Tuck, p. 78.
31 Information about the Klan demonstration is taken from Ed Fain’s article, “Klansmen Set Fire to Cross at Swainsboro,” Macon Telegraph, February 4, 1948, p. 1. Ralph Smith, Sr.’s quote is as it was set forth in Fain’s article.
work).\textsuperscript{32} Swainsboro’s mayor, Ralph Smith, Sr., claimed that this episode had been “the first time the Klan had demonstrated in this Southeast Georgia farming and lumbering community since the heyday of the invisible empire in the ‘20’s.” The Klan’s re-emergence in this city after about a twenty-year slumber was front-page newsworthy. The reporter quoted the leader as the cross continued burning, “‘We do not hate any race, color or creed,’” the leader said. He added that the Klan had gathered to rededicate itself to maintenance of the Southern tradition of the races. ‘We intend to carry these traditions out and maintain segregation of the races.’ he said.”\textsuperscript{33}

His statement may have been a reactionary response to Truman’s speech to Congress the previous day, when the President reiterated many of the PCCR’s recommendations, namely calling for an end to segregation on interstate transport and for the District of Columbia to be under its own rule whereby, hopefully, they would end segregation in schools and other public arenas. While there was no physical harm done during this demonstration, the Klan was sending a message that threatened resistance and violence in order to maintain the racial and social status quo.

5.4 Rolling Out To Secure These Rights

The culmination of the PCCR’s work occurred on October 29, 1947 when the committee presented its report to the president. Throughout its ten-month assignment, PCCR committee members and staff had not publicized their work or their decisions. Liberal and minority groups waited with anticipation for the report’s publication, because they really had no idea about the extent of the PCCR’s forthcoming recommendations.\textsuperscript{34} The PCCR’s executive staff also pre-

\textsuperscript{32} Fain; see also Chalmers, p. 329.
\textsuperscript{33} Fain, p. 1.
pared the PCCR members for their necessary role in promoting *TSTR*. Members were instructed on how to conduct themselves during radio addresses and speeches, and PCCR chair Charles E. Wilson stressed the importance that the committee “stand before the public with a point of view no less (or more) unified than that given in our report.” The promotional aspect of the PCCR’s work was very important to the success of the report, and Committee members and staff took this role very seriously. Some held speaking engagements while others distributed abridged versions of the report. Dorothy Tilly organized a conference on civil rights in Atlanta and one staff member, Milton Stewart, created a template for municipalities to use in auditing their civil rights activities.

The PCCR’s overriding recommendation in *To Secure These Rights*, to abolish segregation, threatened to thoroughly dismantle the South’s long established social order and also to redefine southern liberalism and accelerate the pace of the civil rights movement. The NAACP had already been attacking segregation in southern institutions of higher learning via the judicial system, but in the South’s interracial movement, progressive organizations such as the Southern Regional Council stalled in taking a firm stance against segregation.

Buttressed by Myrdal’s groundbreaking and best-selling 1944 work, *An American Dilemma*, and also from evidence gathered in the interviews and investigations conducted during its

---


36 Charles E. Wilson to “All Members of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights”, October 29, 1947, Papers of Francis P. Matthews, HST Library, Microfilm #1729, Reel 10, President Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights Papers, edited by William E. Juhnke, Black Studies Research Sources: Microfilms from Major Archival and Manuscript Collections, A Microfilm Project of University Publications of America, Inc. Frederick, Maryland, 1984. Microfilm # 1729, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. (hereinafter, PCCR Papers, Emory University).


tenure, the PCCR initiated a new way of thinking about the “race problem.” Rather than remain rooted in gradualism and not attacking segregation directly, the PCCR denounced segregation and called for its immediate abolition. In his epic study, Myrdal recommended that changing American whites’ attitudes about African Americans would require education, and he believed that the American press was the most expedient and logical vehicle to disseminate that information. Prior to the late 1940s, the northern mainstream press largely ignored stories of discrimination against blacks, leaving that task to the African American press. However, when the PCCR issued its report newspapers all across the nation, prominent and otherwise, were awash in articles (many of them front page articles and even headlines) covering the story. Therefore, the PCCR’s work broke through the barrier Myrdal had observed, and this occurred several years before the news media made the “classical phase” of the civil rights movement front page news. TSTR was, indeed, huge news across the nation. Philleo Nash’s

39 Juhnke, “Creating a New Charter of Freedom, pp. 111-112. Digests of An American Dilemma were made available to members of the PCCR to assist with the due diligence of their task.

40 For more on the Report on the Economic Conditions of the South, see Patricia Sullivan, Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Steven F. Lawson, ed., To Secure These Rights: The Report of President Harry S Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004), p. 22 provides that “Although the PCCR blazed new trails, it did have an important guidepost to help direct it. The publication of Gunnar Myrdal’s An American Dilemma not only provides a massive amount of factual information about race relations, but it also furnished a framework to interpret the data, one that postwar liberals adopted in approaching civil rights.”


42 Roberts and Klibanoff, p. 5.


44 Hall uses this term, “classical phase” of the civil rights movement in her article, “The Long Civil Rights Movement,” pp. 1234 and 1245.
opinion of *TSTR* was that it was “sensational.”\(^{45}\) Press reactions to the report ranged from ecstatic to cautioned optimism outside of the South to outrage in the South.

In October 1947, for the first time, the issue of civil rights not only became newsworthy of mainstream America, but it also became front-page news in many cities across the nation.\(^{46}\) The PCCR and its staff knew that their work and conclusions were vitally important to many across the country, but they were also critical to starting the process of shifting white racial attitudes – and the best way to do that was to educate citizens. Distribution of the report became a primary goal of the PCCR’s staff.

The report struck a nerve with its audience. Less than a week after it was issued, Nash wrote his boss, David Niles, claiming that “[D]emand for the Civil Rights Report has been so heavy that we are having a hard time keeping up with the requests and have begun to ration the remaining copies.”\(^{47}\) By January 1948, only three months after the PCCR issued its report, Niles wrote Clark Clifford, Special Counsel to President Truman, estimating that, including the “book and newspaper form to date,” over 900,000 copies of *TSTR* were in circulation.\(^{48}\) Despite

---


\(^{47}\) Philleo Nash to David K. Niles, November 3, 1947, Records of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights, Papers of Philleo Nash, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Microfilm # 1729, Reel 9, PCCR Papers, Emory University.

\(^{48}\) David K. Niles to Clark Clifford, January 14, 1948, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Files of George M. Elsey, Microfilm # 1729, Reel 10, PCCR Papers, Emory University. According to Patricia Sullivan in *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*, (The New Press, 2009), p. 353, “Over a million copies of the report were distributed – the government printing office produced 25,000 copies, and Simon & Schuster published 35,000 copies, all at $1 apiece; the progressive newspaper *PM* reproduced the report as a Sunday supplement, offering it for 10 cents a copy; 5 cents for bulk sales of one hundred or more. Black newspapers serialized the report, the American Jewish Committee distributed two hundred thousand summaries, and the *New York Times* printed an abridged copy of the committee’s recommendations.”
the large number of copies in circulation, the report’s distribution was limited to progressive agencies and church groups. On March 31, 1948, the American Council on Race Relations (ACRR) issued a status regarding “State and Local Community Activities and Plans to Carry Out Recommendations of “TO SECURE THESE RIGHTS.” This report focused on the distribution of TSTR in several cities and states across the nation and also on the various “Meetings and Other Activities” planned at the state and local level. The author of this report lamented that

The reports from agencies reveal that approximately 16,000 copies of the Report were distributed in 13 communities. If this distribution was typical for all local agencies and for other communities not reported the number distributed, or from which reports have not yet been received, the total number of copies or reprints distributed by local agencies was relatively low considering the importance of the Report to all citizens. It is also significant that the distribution is selective, being primarily to persons who are members of intergroup relations agencies, to those attending meetings and to selected officials.

Apprently, from the reports submitted, local activity is still in the education and discussion stage. Even future plans indicate further discussion. Only a few communities report development of action committees, and support of specific legislation.49

Within five months of TSTR’s publication and two months after Truman’s February 1948 Civil Rights speech to Congress, the expectations for community action and support of civil rights legislation had fallen short, perhaps foreshadowing possible resistance for change at the local level.

Certainly most Americans did not read To Secure These Rights, but many widely circulated mainstream newspapers offered broad coverage of the report. The New York Times provided extremely thorough coverage of To Secure These Rights, beginning with an article on the front page and continuing with various articles within the issue devoted to various recommenda-

tions made by the Committee, including voting rights, exposure of hate groups and subversives.\textsuperscript{50}

On page fourteen, the paper devoted almost an entire two page spread, complete with a photograph of the PCCR with Truman and excerpts and diagrams from the report itself. The diagram in the center of this spread clearly depicted the PCCR’s position that the United States federal government take a much stronger stance as the guardian of its citizens’ civil rights. Not only would a permanent civil rights commission report directly to the President, but there would be standing House and Senate joint committees on civil rights, and under the Department of Justice and the FBI Civil Rights Unit, regional offices would be established throughout the country. The flow chart indicated that the Permanent Civil Rights Commission would make recommendations to the President, who would in turn, make recommendations that would be forged into legislation for his approval. At the heart of this flow chart stood the President of the United States, who would be ultimately responsible for guarding the civil rights of the nation’s citizens.\textsuperscript{51} This diagram seemed to epitomize the phrase, “The Buck Stops Here,” which was closely associated with Truman.

The report made front page news in some papers on the West Coast, too, as the San Francisco Chronicle covered the PCCR’s report in detail, devoting several articles in its October 30, 1947 edition beginning with the front page article touting, “\textbf{Civil Rights: Truman Board Reports: ‘End All Discrimination.’}” Astutely, reporter Carroll Kirkpatrick noted that Truman “carefully avoided committing himself on the controversial recommendations of the report,” despite the fact that he admitted that “he created the Committee ‘with a feeling of urgency’ when radical and religious intolerance began to appear after the war.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{50} Leviero, “Guardians for Civil Rights Proposed by Truman Board, p.1; “Denial of Rights Seen at Capital,” p. 14; “Urges Registering Subversive Bodes,”; “Statement by the President.”


\textsuperscript{52} Kilpatrick, “Civil Rights Truman Board Reports: ‘End All Discrimination,’” p. 1.
Kirkpatrick, the Washington correspondent to *The Chronicle*, not only covered the essentials of the PCCR’s report but, cognizant of his audience, he also emphasized items that would be most pertinent to westerners. His article included coverage of the PCCR’s criticism of the West’s mishandling of citizens of Japanese descent during World War II. Quoting from the report, he used the Committee’s words that described this egregious act as, “the most striking mass interference since slavery and the right to physical freedom was the evacuation and exclusion of persons of Japanese descent from the West Coast during the past war.”

Kilpatrick’s article also focused on the committee’s biggest target – the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C., explaining that “[T]he most impassioned criticism was reserved for what the committee called widespread discriminatory practices in the District of Columbia. It said the treatment of Negro Americans in the national capital is ‘shameful.’” Kilpatrick further quoted the committee on this topic, “[T]he committee feels most deeply that … the situation that exists in the District of Columbia is intolerable.”

*The Washington Post* carried a total of four articles about *TSTR*. Its front-page article characterized *To Secure These Rights* as “176 pages of social dynamite” and stated directly the crux of *To Secure These Rights* in the opening sentence: “[T]he President’s Committee on Civil Rights called on the Nation to take immediate and bold action to wipe out segregation and discrimination from the American way of life.” *The Washington Post*, noted for its liberal position, continued to publish articles about the report and its recommendations for the next several weeks. The articles proved too much for Congressman John Rankin of Mississippi, who, since Senator Theodore Bilbo’s death, had inherited the dubious distinction of being the most inflammatory racist politician from Mississippi. In December 1947, *The Atlanta Daily World* com-

---

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
mented that Rankin had “blasted” The Washington Post and its owner, Eugene Meyer, for using the paper “against white people of the District of Columbia to stir up race trouble and to try to force Negroes into the white public schools of the city of Washington.”

While Rankin accused the Washington Post of stirring up “race trouble” and potentially agitating African Americans to action, the southern press could have been similarly accused of stirring up white racist sentiment against TSTR. In other sections of the country, newspapers reprinted excerpts of the report but, in the South, coverage was largely characterized by sensationalized newspaper accounts and editorials that focused mainly on the PCCR’s most radical recommendations. The majority of white southerners learned about the report from these newspaper editorials and articles. While TSTR may have “sparked a national discussion on civil rights,” southern newspapers editors and publishers used their influence to rally many whites against civil rights and the recommendations put forth in TSTR.

5.5 The Southern Press Reacts to “176 Pages of Social Dynamite”

About six weeks after the PCCR issued its report, Dorothy Tilly was asked to speak to the Women’s National Press Club on December 11, 1947 about the Committee and its recommendations. After concluding her speech Tilly fielded questions from the audience. One of the journalists asked Tilly about the South’s reaction to TSTR. Tilly responded directly and honestly, “If you have seen the editorials, you’ll know it’s not so good.”

Undoubtedly, the most

57 Sullivan, Lift Every Voice, p. 353.
60 Dorothy Tilly, Speech, Women’s National Press Club, December 11, 1947, audio recording, Dorothy Rogers Tilly Papers, 1868-1970, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (hereinafter Tilly Papers, Emory University).
heated reaction from the newspapers came from the southern press. The prescient Tilly had predicted a southern outcry even before the report was published. In the September 12-13, 1947 PCCR meetings, in which the Committee reviewed the report’s draft, Tilly cautioned that the southern papers would denounce the report: “I talked to one of the editors in the South about it. He is the editor of the Atlanta Journal. He is one of the most liberal and outstanding men in the South, Mr. Biggers.” Tilly had spoken with Biggers about the PCCR’s recommendation to withhold federal aid from schools that were segregated. She relayed that his reaction would be that “the Atlanta Journal itself would have to attack the report.”

Even months before the PCCR published its report, certain southern newspaper editors offered commentary on the supposed recommendations the Committee was considering. In February 1947 Louisiana’s The Shreveport Times sarcastically referred to the PCCR as an “impartial committee” and singled out PCCR member attorney Morris Ernst for most of its criticism, referencing descriptions of him as “radical rather than liberal” and “perhaps extremely leftist.” Also troublesome to this editor was his interpretation that the committee, largely due to Ernst’s influence, focused on “racial ‘rights’ and social equality.” The Times referenced the Dallas, Texas publication, The Southern Weekly, whose coverage of the PCCR “accuses Mr. Ernst, in effect, of gross hypocrisy in his approach”…in the…”study of civil rights by the Truman Committee.” According to this editorial, Ernst had suggested to his colleagues during PCCR meetings that “the Ku Klux Klan, the Columbians, and Gerald L.K. Smith all be invited to appear before the committee so that it might have ‘two sides’ of civil rights issues involving the South.” The Colombians were a new group that rivaled the Ku Klux Klan. Gerald L. K. Smith had aligned him-

---

63 Ibid.
self with Huey Long, but after Long’s assassination veered to the far right and became an ardent anti-Semite.\textsuperscript{64} According to \textit{The Shreveport Times}, “the \textit{Southern Weekly} infers Mr. Ernst suggested this solely to hold before the nation such persons as Gerald Smith and such organizations as the Klan as representative of the South as a whole; to create a field day of headlines pictures millions of Southerners as ‘Gerald Smiths.’”\textsuperscript{65}

Not surprisingly, the \textit{Times} also opposed the FEPC and noted that those on the PCCR who “favor” the FEPC did so “because they are of communist philosophy in such matters even if not of Communist party membership.” This editor further denounced the Committee’s work because it favored social equality.\textsuperscript{66}

Nashville, Tennessee’s conservative \textit{Banner} also voiced its opposition to the PCCR’s recommendations, focusing mainly on its call for “withhold[ing] federal funds ‘from state universities which discriminate against racial and religious groups.’” The \textit{Banner} cautioned its readers about the danger of “subsidy,” meaning if one accepts money for educational and other institutions, then ultimately the control of these institutions lay in the hands of those who are subsidizing. The \textit{Banner} perceived the PCCR as another vehicle by which outsiders were attempting to control the South, and concluded with the following warning: “[I]f public education were subsidized, it would be every school in that system – and no local authority would have any voice in it.”\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65} Editorial: Civil Rights,” \textit{The Shreveport Times}. February 13, 1947.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} “Where Subsidy Lead,” \textit{The Nashville Banner}. February 4, 1947, Records of PCCR, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Microfilm # 1729, Reel 9, PCCR Papers, Emory University.
As predicted, the outcry against TSTR from southern newspaper editors began on October 30, 1947, the day after the PCCR presented its report to Truman. By November 9, 1947, William A. Fowlkes of the Atlanta Daily World wrote of the Southern editors,

I have read scores of editorials from the metropolitan press over the nation, and, except for in the South, the attitude has been laudatory [sic]. It’s a funny thing about our South, the land of the ex-masters and ex-slaves, there is an almost fanatical determination that the Negro shall ‘stay in his place,’ hang all democracy, Christianity and all else. This determination, this attitude may prove our undoing, however.”

In Atlanta, Georgia, arguably the most progressive city in the South, the initial coverage of the PCCR’s report was subdued. In fact, in reading the Atlanta Journal, which was more conservative than the Atlanta Constitution, one might have missed the coverage entirely since it did not appear as front page news. On October 29th, the day the PCCR issued its report, two articles appeared about the event buried on page thirty-one. As Tilly predicted, these articles focused on the threat to end segregation in schools via restricting federal grants to schools that were segregated - the very point on which Tilly and Graham had dissented. While the first article, written by Max Hall, sported an inflammatory-yet-accurate headline, “Ban Segregation Now Truman Group Urges,” it did not castigate the PCCR but rather reported the news in a balanced manner. Hall revealed that the Committee had focused on the flawed “separate but equal” argument, insisting that it “is one of the outstanding myths of American history” mainly due to the school systems, “because: ‘It is almost always true that while indeed separate, these facilities are far from equal.’” Hall also listed all members of the Committee, rather than singling out the two southern members. Just below Hall’s article appeared one by Ken Turner entitled, “Loss of Federal Funds Feared in Rights Move.” Compared with Hall’s article, Turner’s was hyperbolic

---

and he blasted the PCCR for “whooping up a lot of financial dynamite” and threatened “political repercussions” due to certain recommendations by the Committee.  

The recommendation to withhold federal funds from “any public or private agency permitting discrimination or segregation based on race, color, creed or national origin,” Turner described as something that “would give this state [Georgia] a hangover that would take years to get over.” 

The very next day, Atlantan Dorothy Tilly (one of the dissenters against the recommendation to withhold federal funds from segregated schools) spoke publicly against the idea in another Atlanta Journal article written by Turner. Tilly argued that “shutting off of federal funds for grants in aid – public housing and hospitals for example – because segregation exists ‘is not the remedy.’” Tilly suggested that “[W]hat we should have instead is a much larger proportion of such funds because our need is greater.” In this article, Tilly tried to assuage southerners who might feel as if the TSTR singled out the South by admitting that “she had pleaded with the entire committee for ‘some understanding of the South and the background problem this report treats.’” Nevertheless, she held fast in her support of the report because the South did indeed have issues, and she admitted that the South had more problems than other parts of the nation. In fact, she explained that “[B]ecause we have a greater proportion of one of the nation’s minorities in the South, we must admit that our problem is more widespread than in some other sections of the country.”

A few days after these articles appeared, Journal’s editor Biggers followed through on his earlier threat to Tilly when he voiced his opposition to TSTR. In his November 2, 1947 editorial, Biggers declared the report “a dismaying document” and “an example of the extremes to

---

71 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
which headstrong theory, divorced from common sense, will run and of the intolerance into which self-assured crusaders for tolerance too frequently fall.”

Biggers claimed that he did not disagree with the entire report – just, as he wrote, “the most salient of its recommendations – those aimed especially at the South” because of its “light-minded indifference to consequences.”

He defended the separate but equal stance, not only because “[S]egregation is a fact deep-rooted in Southern life,” but also because “it will be a safeguard against racial tensions and conflicts.” He further claimed that “wiping out overnight a whole region’s long-inherited pattern of living is simply preposterous.”

Biggers not only stressed gradualism, but he defended it in this editorial – ostensibly for safety reasons. He argued that recommendations such as those in the TSTR “serve only to embarrass the efforts of Southern leaders who are working for the substantial rights of the minority race.” Furthermore, he claimed that this report and others like it fuel the fire of race baiting and “strengthen the hand of the Bilboes.”

Biggers’ fear that the report would “strengthen the hand of the Bilboes” was well-founded; and he also claimed that TSTR would awaken the “demagogues who traffic in prejudice and passion.” Basically, Biggers believed the PCCR and all associated with it had handed the extremists “their most fertile opportunity.”

A few days following the printing of Biggers’ editorial, two letters to the editor appeared in the Atlanta Journal. One, sent by E. A. Rogers of Atlanta, was complimentary of the editor’s opinion while critical of Truman and the PCCR.

I want to congratulate you on the editorial that appeared in the issue of The Journal which I bought tonite, with reference to the Report on Truman’s Civil Rights Committee. Its logic is simply unanswerable.

---

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
Personally, I don’t think Truman has the slightest hope of such a program being enacted. We are on the eve of another presidential election and I believe this is an attempt on his part to hold the Negro vote.

After all, neither Truman nor this Committee should be criticized. They are simply delivering to the Negroes what little of the Democratic party is left after Roosevelt got through selling it to them in return for votes.  

In contrast a second letter was printed, written by Witherspoon Dodge of Atlanta, who was an outspoken advocate for racial justice. Dodge was a former Protestant pastor who in the 1930s became a union activist and organizer and a member of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW). Dodge also served as the FEPC director for Region VII in the mid-1940s. In this letter, Dodge enumerated the “eight indubitable signs” exhibited in the country, more so in the South, that lead to fascism: “Racial supremacy, hostility to labor unions, appeal to prejudice and hate instead of reason, destruction of civil liberties, growing corporate control of the state, inflation, a campaign of anticommunism, and military mindedness.” In closing, Dodge questioned whether the South was “the seed-plot of a future Fascist America.”

Paul Cummings of Atlanta wrote a letter to the editor of the Journal that was printed on November 7, 1947. In it he chastised Biggers for the hyperbolic tone that characterized Biggers’ editorial, especially when the editorial proclaimed that the report was “an example of the extremes to which headstrong theory divorced from common sense will run, and of the intolerance into which self-assured crusaders for tolerance too frequently fall.” To this, Cummings tried to apply some logic when he retorted, “Now, Mr. Editor, in all fairness, tell your readers that

---

Charles E. Wilson, president of General Electric, was chairman of the Committee that wrote the report. Let them judge whether he is the type of man who runs to headstrong theories or whether he builds on sound principles.” To further smear the Committee and its recommendations, Biggers drew upon negative World War II rhetoric in describing the PCCR’s recommendation for an FEPC as “the makings of a veritable Gestapo.” Cummings criticized Biggers’ on this point as well, chiding “Now really, gentlemen, if you’ve read the only Federal FEPC bill that was ever given serious consideration, you’d see that it was patterned after the National Labor Relations Act. You may not like that one either, but it’s [sic] agency has been in existence almost 10 years and even Messrs. Taft and Hartley don’t say it is a Gestapo agency.” Cummings also corrected Biggers for inaccurately claiming that those who wrote the report were outside agitators trying to force their ‘long distance doctrinaires’ on the South, “when another member of the Committee is Frank Graham, president of the University of North Carolina and not the only Southerner on the Committee.”

In conclusion, Cummings responded to the Biggers’ claim that the rights of the majority should supersede those of the minority with this final reprimand, “No, we won’t be ‘jeopardizing the rights of us all’ -- only seeing that the majority group shares its extra privileges with those of the minority. That’s just good democracy.” Although admittedly in the minority, some southern voices favored the PCCR and its report and, to its credit, *The Journal* published letters both for and against *TSTR*.

In contrast to the conservative *Journal’s* editorial on *TSTR*, the more liberal *Atlanta Constitution*’s editor, Ralph McGill, wrote a far less damning piece that was published on October 31, 1947. In it, McGill conceded that the “objectives laid down by the President’s Committee”

---

85 Ibid.
86 For more information on Ralph McGill, see for example, Leonard Ray Teel, Ralph Emerson McGill: *Voice of a Southern Conscience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).
might be “laudable.” Nevertheless, McGill believed that in issuing such a report, “little good is accomplished” and warned that “much harm may result from any attempt to force reforms which legitimately may come only in the course of time.”

At this stage in his life, McGill favored a gradualist stance to solving the race issue, explaining that “racial segregation is merely an outward manifestation of an inner state of mind. Whether this state of mind is proper or improper is immaterial. It is there, and it can be eradicated not by laws but only by the evolutionary process and the acquirement by the human race of the spiritual qualities which effectively eliminate it.”

In another editorial he wrote a few days later, McGill described several letters that had been sent to him about the PCCR and TSTR, indicating that many accused the report of being part of “a Communist plot to bring about social equality in the South,” while “[a]nother spoke of the Communist effort to smash the traditions in the South and promised to wallow in blood up to his umbilicus before he would allow it.”

McGill acknowledged the goodness in the report, stating that “[i]t is a report with Christian aims, just as the Bible is a good book.” Despite the praise for the work, McGill opined that it was flawed because “it can’t be enforced, even with troops. It still has to be accomplished by improving the human heart.” As it is, “[i]t will harden resistance and widen the gulf.”

McGill believed that southerners needed to fix the race problem in the South and not have the federal government fix it for them.

One letter to the editor at the Constitution targeted Tilly and suggested that she mind her own business and start civil rights improvements within her own neighborhood. In another let-
ter John A. Wagnon condemned *TSTR’s* call for “social quality,” describing it as “the most damnable thing I ever read. Wagnon continued his tirade by calling for “red-blooded Southern white men” to “tell that crowd in language they will be able to understand that we do not propose to tolerate any such situation.” He predicted that “we will wade through blood up to our necks before we will have this blight forced upon the culture and traditions of the Southern white race,” and he ended with “[t]he Southern white man has not forgotten how to fight and he is becoming really aroused and angry.”

A third letter against the PCCR and its report claimed that “Truman’s Committee poured a fresh supply of fuel on flames already beyond control in the South and Georgia in particular.”

Elsewhere in Georgia, newspaper coverage ranged from one rather innocuous piece to unbridled criticism of the PCCR, *TSTR*, and Truman. In this fairly noncommittal editorial, “Re-Dedication For All” that ran on October 30, 1947 in *The Albany Herald*, the author neither condoned nor condemned the PCCR or its report, but rather encouraged Americans to embrace a more worldly outlook and hoped that *TSTR* would unravel America’s complacency. The coverage on the *Savannah Morning News’* front page on October 30, 1947 regarding the PCCR and *TSTR* highlighted the report’s extensive criticism of the South and, in an accusatory tone, named the two Committee members that “live in the South.” Following the initial coverage, editorials written subsequently revealed the resentment and displeasure at Truman, the Committee, its white southern members, and its recommendations.

---

“Aimed At the South” was the title of the *Savannah Morning News*’ editorial published on October 31, 1947. Despite the broad scope of *TSTR*, this southern newspaper editor read the report as a castigation of the Jim Crow South and blasted the Committee and its report on several counts, accusing them of being “brain-trusters of the Roosevelt-Truman camp” and compared the PCCR’s recommendations to Reconstruction legislation:

The report, almost from beginning to end, would disrupt the established economic and social traditions and customs of the South, especially in connection with race relationships, to an extent as great if not greater than the famed proposed force bills aimed at the South during Reconstruction Days!

The editor singled out and disparaged Graham and Tilly as southern traitors, when he wrote,

[I]t is no credit to this region, moreover that among the fifteen members of the committee are Dr. Frank P. Graham, president of the University of North Carolina and Mrs. M.E. Tilly of Atlanta, an official of the Women’s Society of Christian Service of the Methodist Church.

The editorial continued in its criticism of several other PCCR recommendations by calling the FEPC “outrageous,” declaring that it was “spuriously designed to do away with what is called “discrimination.”” In discrediting the PCCR’s recommendation to end the poll-tax, this editor reminded his readers that “Georgia’s poll-tax already has been repealed by our state Legislature,” and then educated his readers on the damaging consequences of that action: “and it is costing the state approximately $400,000 a year for school purposes at a time when our schools were never in greater need.” In defending the poll-tax, which practically ensured the disfranchisement of many southern African Americans, he wrote, “…it can also be argued with reason that it is little enough to pay a dollar or more for the privilege of voting – and that any citizen

---

which is incapable of doing so, white or black, is hardly qualified to choose between men and measures at the ballot box.”  

For several days after TSTR’s publication, the Savannah Morning News editor continued his attack against the PCCR and its report. To further discredit the Committee, its work, and its recommendations, the News published an article that suggested not all African Americans wanted civil rights. The News quoted African American leader H.W. Newell of Chattanooga, Tennessee who denounced the PCCR’s recommendation to end segregation. Newell claimed, “’All the negro people want is to be left alone…Personally I think the President is gunning for votes…I believe the negro is better treated in the South than in the North. Equality up there is a lot of hooey.’” Newell concluded by stating that he did not believe that “…intelligent Southern negroes want to try to do away with segregation at this time.’”

The Savannah Morning News also treated its readers to the opinions of other mainstream southern newspaper editorials to demonstrate that the South was united against the PCCR’s recommendation to end segregation. In particular, the News focused on two editorials – one from the Atlanta Constitution and one from the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Both newspapers’ editors, Ralph McGill and Virginius Dabney respectively, were noted for their southern liberalism. The News highlighted this fact and noted that the PCCR “is coming in for sharp criticism from some sources which, judging by their past records, would be expected to support its recommendations.”

On November 4, 1947, the Savannah Morning News reprinted McGill’s October 31, 1947 editorial from the Atlanta Constitution. It also shared the Dabney’s Richmond Times-Dispatch editorial from the Atlanta Constitution.

---


Dispatch editorial in which he cautioned against the PCCR’s recommendations for legislation, quoting Dabney, “‘Coercive laws are unwise and dangerous!’” 101 Concluding his own editorial, the Savannah Morning News editor quoted Dabney’s editorial at length, which predicted dire consequences:

‘[I]f the program of federal legislation now proposed by the Civil Rights Commission were to be adopted by Congress in the near future…the results in the Southern states would be even worse than those in the nation under prohibition. They would be worse because the explosive issue of race relations is involved, and it has been demonstrated time and again that when efforts are made to settle that question through passing coercive laws, conditions are made worse rather than better.’ 102

In his editorial, Dabney communicated his disagreement with the PCCR’s report and revealed the origins of his rupture with this new-fangled definition of southern liberalism that now included a South without segregation, intervention by the federal government, and an acceleration of the civil rights movement. 103 The Savannah Morning News editor closed his own editorial with this pithy yet cautionary remark to those in favor of the proposed changes, “[A] word to the wise ought to be sufficient.” 104

In other North Carolina papers, editors gave a mixed review to the PCCR and its work. Like Dabney, The Charlotte News editor condemned the PCCR’s recommendation to end segregation and also portended violence if the changes were implemented:

The committee’s bombastic demand for upheaval now, certain to kindle anew the flames of Southern resentment, will only serve to complicate that task (full realization of the democratic ideals of freedom and equality) and to delay its ultimate accomplishment. 105

101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Dabney was one southern liberal who could not make the move from “separate but equal” to desegregation. For more about Dabney see, for example, “Virginius Dabney 1901-1985” in Encyclopedia Virginia, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Dabney_Virginius_1901-1995.
While *The Raleigh Times* gave a mixed review, claiming that the PCCR had recommended “‘some worthwhile sentiments’” the editorial was also direct in its pronouncement against the committee when the editor concluded, “some of its recommendations are unfortunate, from the Southern viewpoint.” This editor also predicted violence and impasse when he wrote, “‘Its recommendation to ban all manner of racial segregation, if put into effect, would tend to do irreparable harm to interracial relations which have been steadily improving in the South over a period of years.’” Even a year later, *Raleigh News and Observer*’s editor, Jonathan Daniels, who had worked with Philleo Nash under Presidents Roosevelt and Truman in the area of race relations and who was a good friend of Frank Graham, described the PCCR’s recommendations as “radical” and applauded Truman’s rejection of some of them.

When commenting on the recommendation to remove racial segregation, the Nashville, Tennessee *Banner*’s editor blasted the PCCR and alluded that the PCCR’s recommendation was influenced by communists and by Henry Wallace:

> It is no accident, certainly that the hue and cry now echoed by this committee originated in the left wing on imported politics is most assiduously cultivated by an agency personifying a political system under which there are no ‘civil rights’ and that the recommendations are identical with what Henry Wallace has been hewing as his own plank. As a matter of fact, were Mr. Truman to stand on this platform, he would first have to crowd Henry off of it.

Elsewhere in Tennessee, the *Chattanooga Times* voiced a unique perspective of the South’s civil rights - those of white citizens:

> We are in agreement with many indictments as harsh as they are because we know them to be essentially true. The committee’s

---

106 Ibid.
107 Leuchtenberg, p. 209.
recommendations, we believe, in some instances border upon the very thing it seeks to eliminate—the violation of civil rights. True, the committee’s proposals concern themselves with civil rights of minorities but they tend to overlook similar rights of a majority as far as our own section is concerned. The South has a long way to go in the field of racial cooperation. But federal imposition of changes which would do violence to the region’s basic structure is not the answer.\footnote{109}

In another perverse argument, the editor of Florence, South Carolina’s \textit{Morning News} compared segregation with the fundamental ideal of freedom, writing, “This newspaper is liberal in its view of the racial issue…but we reject completely that a correction of the evils can be found in breaking down the principle of racial segregation, a principle which is just as cardinal and traditional to Southern society as is the principle of freedom in democratic circles.”\footnote{110}

In Alabama, \textit{The Mobile Register} attempted to be balanced in its critique of \textit{TSTR} but essentially criticized it for singling out the South:

\begin{quote}
Something can be said for a portion of its proposals— in some cases much can be said. Yet the committee went to such lengths in the unwarranted and impractical— it showed so little regard for states’ rights and so little respect for the South— that the merit in its report is more than offset by the unmerited.\footnote{111}
\end{quote}

Another Alabama newspaper, the \textit{Montgomery Advertiser} published an article on the day that the PCCR issued its report to Truman. The author attempted balance by explaining that in the report “Discrimination against Negroes in the South was criticized at length, but other regions in the North and West were singled out for violations of civil rights. The nation’s capital itself was scored as a ‘graphic illustration of a failure of democracy’ and as the gateway to ‘Jim

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{109} \textit{The Chattanooga Times} as quoted in “Lifting of Racial Barriers Condemned in Dixie Press,” \textit{Montgomery Advertiser}, Montgomery, Alabama, October 29, 1947, page. 1, Reel 000284, ADAH.
\footnote{111} \textit{The Mobile Register}, as quoted in “Lifting of Racial Barriers Condemned in Dixie Press,” \textit{Montgomery Advertiser}, Montgomery, Alabama, October 29, 1947, page. 1, Reel 000284, ADAH.
\end{footnotes}
Crow’ transportation in the South.”

To offset the neutral tone of this article, another one appeared below it, in which several southern editors’ comments were quoted – mostly in harsh reaction against the PCCR’s recommendations.

In Huntsville, Alabama, The Huntsville Times also reported at length on Truman’s Committee and its recommendations. Part of one article singled out the Committee’s two southern members yet no other committee members were named. As if blaming Graham and Tilly, the article, directly after their mention, stated that “Much of the report deals with the South, and with the Negroes of America. But the committee said the other regions also have their ‘interferences’ with the rights of individuals.”

In Greenville, Mississippi, the southern liberal editor of the Delta Democrat-Times, Hodding Carter, editorialized against the report mainly on the basis of federal intervention in creating legislation to cure the South’s ills of lynching, poll taxes, and employment discrimination. Elsewhere in the Magnolia State, the reaction against the PCCR and TSTR in newsprint was angry and defensive. In Mississippi’s state capital, Jackson, the ultra-conservative Clarion-Ledger printed a subset of the article found in The Huntsville Times with a headline that, despite its typo, would catch readers’ attention: “Report Demands Segregation of Races ‘At Once’: Truman Board OKs Anti-Lynch, FEPC Legislation”.

The article’s author wrote that the PCCR “made 35 recommendations on explosive subjects in the whole civil rights field.” Then the author listed several of the recommendations put forth by the PCCR, including one “that

---

112 “Discrimination End Is Urged By Committee: Truman’s Civil Rights Unit Says Do it Now; Red Expose Approved,” Montgomery Advertiser, Birmingham, Alabama, October 28, 1947, page 1, Reel 000284, ADAH.
113 “Lifting of Racial Barriers Condemned in Dixie Press,” Montgomery Advertiser, Montgomery, Alabama, October 29, 1947, page 1, Reel 000284, ADAH.
115 Ibid.
116 Roberts and Klibanoff, p. 39.
117 “Report Demands Segregation of Races ‘At Once,’” Clarion-Ledger, Jackson, Mississippi, October 30, 1947, p. 1, Reel 23973, MDAH.
Congress and the state legislatures outlaw segregation and discrimination based on race, color, creed, or national origin, in such places as trains, buses, schools, hospitals, theaters, hotels, restaurants, the armed services, and private employment.”

The backdrop against which Mississippi faced the PCCR’s recommendations included a heated senatorial election campaign, with several candidates vying for the late Theodore Bilbo’s Senate seat. Two articles in the October 31, 1947 *Jackson Daily News* described two of these candidates’ reaction to the PCCR’s recommendations. One article about Forrest B. Jackson described him as “reading from a Jackson newspaper that told of the Civil Rights committee’s demand that segregation be abolished.” Jackson then stated “it is high time for the would-be traducers of our southern customs to realize the people of Mississippi are not asleep, nor are they like a bunch of cattle that can be pushed or led around.” In the very next column an article quoted senatorial candidate Bill Colmer as saying, “All the legislative experience and ability of Southern Senators will be taxed to the limit to block the passage of anti-South legislation in the next Congress. If Mississippi sends an inexperienced newcomer to the Senate, he will be cooling his heels in the back rows while anti-segregation and anti-poll tax bills are passed and made into Federal Law.” Colmer continued, “It’s going to take more than votes against the bills to defeat them. It’s going to take a lot of legislative know-how on the part of Southern Senators, with the Mississippi Senators necessarily taking an important part to maneuver effectively and keep such legislation from passing the Senate. Because, if they are ever brought up for vote, the coalition of northern Democrats and Republicans will, for political reasons, certainly pass the bills.”

---

118 Ibid.
Headlines from the Jackson *Clarion Ledger* conveyed a sense of emergency because of the PCCR’s report and articles in this newspaper also threatened the white South’s defiance against the PCCR’s recommendations, whatever the cost.\(^{122}\)

Tilly was correct in her fears – southern editors excoriated the PCCR and its report. The newspaper editors’ commentary across the South in the late autumn of 1947 was just to be the beginning of the vitriol against the PCCR and its recommendations. 1948 would bring another round of civil rights advances and this would again arouse the white South’s ire, which would be reflected in newspapers across the region.

### 5.6 The Southern Press Helps Plant the Seed of Resistance

After the initial furor in the southern newspapers against *TSTR* in late October and early November 1947, the coverage of it in the mainstream southern press died off through the holiday season. Nevertheless, when the New Year began, the topic of race relations was very much on the minds of southern editors, journalists, columnists, politicians, and even some influential businessmen.

On January 1, 1948, the *Clarion-Ledger* reported that South Carolina was about to lose its all-white primary.\(^{123}\) The news foreshadowed more unraveling of white political control over the South. In Alabama, Judy Brown’s New Year’s Day column in the *Birmingham News* reflected a defensive tone as she criticized national and syndicated columnist Walter Winchell for what she deemed to be his overall lack of understanding about the South. Winchell was a nationally syndicated columnist known for his criticism of the South. Brown was subtly reassuring

---

\(^{122}\) “Wright Takes Issue With ‘Racial’ Report: Returns to Capitol From Vacation Trip. *Clarion Ledger*, Jackson, Mississippi, November 1, 1947, page 1, Reel 21288, MDAH.

\(^{123}\) “Negro Right to Vote In Carolina Upheld: Whole South is Affected by Ruling,” *The Clarion-Ledger*, Jackson, Mississippi, January 1, 1948, p. 3, Reel 29194, MDAH.
and reminding her readers why things should stay the same in the South with respect to race relations:

...Walter Winchell, like others not born and bred Southerners, does not ‘get us’ down here. He does not understand our relations with the Negroes, who are so important a part of our lives that it is only natural that we should be good to them.

To understand Southerners and their point of view one must live in the South, and even then it takes years to grasp the idea that our attitude towards much which Northerners deplore is actuated not by any desire to be unjust or unkind, but by a determination to do what is right and best for this section as a whole – in other words, for the greatest good of the greatest number, of whatever race or creed. 124

Almost a week later on January 6, the Birmingham News featured an article in which Georgia’s governor Herman Talmadge lauded Alabama’s new Boswell Amendment, which was the latest scheme devised by Alabama politicians to keep African Americans from voting. 125

The next day Truman issued his 1948 State of the Union address, appealing to the citizens of the United States to think about the opportunities and challenges facing the country in “the changing nature of the modern world.” In this speech Truman resurrected the dialogue on the PCCR and its recommendations by informing the country that the civil rights foundation set down by the PCCR, calling for action by the Federal government would be the subject of a future address by him to Congress.

The United States has always had a deep concern for human rights. Religious freedom, free speech, and freedom of thought are cherished realities in our land. Any denial of human rights is a denial of the basic beliefs of democracy and of our regard for the worth of each individual.

Today, however, some of our citizens are still denied equal opportunity for education, for jobs and economic advancement, and for the expression of their views at the polls. Most serious of all, some are denied equal protection under laws.

125 “Alabama’s Boswell Amendment Praised by Georgia’s Herman Talmadge,” Birmingham News, January 6, 1948. p. 1, Reel 0000457, ADAH.
Whether discrimination is based on race, or creed, or color, or land of origin, it is utterly contrary to American ideals of democracy.
The recent report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights points the way to corrective action by the Federal Government and by State and local governments. Because of the need for effective Federal action, I shall send a special message to the Congress on this important subject.  

Less than a month later on February 2, 1948, Truman, faithful to his word, presented to Congress a subset of the PCCR’s recommendations which commanded Congress to act. Truman’s speech stoked the ire of southern politicians, editors, journalists, and individuals; an ire that had been quiet since late November 1947. Across the region newspaper editors and journalists condemned Truman, the PCCR, and civil rights even more aggressively than they had three months prior. In reaction to Truman’s civil rights push, many newspapers utilized the vitriol from southern politicians’ speeches and comments to incite people at the local level against civil rights.

Georgia’s Albany Herald reported on February 3rd that Truman’s civil rights proposal was “flayed” by the southern congressmen and that as a result of his speech, some were threatening a split in the Democratic Party. The article quoted Senator Eastland from Mississippi, who called Truman’s proposals “‘outrageous,’” and whose words could only serve to spread alarm and anger when he predicted that the “recommendations would destroy the last vestige of the South’s social institutions and mongrelize her people.”

Louisiana Senator Allen Ellender, threatened “[I]f legislation of this character is passed, I know well that the South will bolt the Democratic Party.”

---

128 Ibid.
On February 4, 1948, the *Macon Telegraph* reported that Congressman Thomas Abernethy of Mississippi had proposed that the southern governors (who were attending their annual conference in Tallahassee, Florida) “ask for a ‘showdown’ meeting in Washington with party leaders” over the assault from Truman on civil rights.\(^{129}\) The Congressman stated,

> The time has arrived for concerted action and for all true southerners to stand up and be counted. If there is any doubt in the minds of Southern people that the present leaders of the Democratic party are hell bent on bartering or destroying us, our southern institutions and traditions for the support of radical Negro minorities, then they need only examine the message which the president sent to congress yesterday recommending, among other things, the immediate enactment of FEPC, anti-poll tax and anti-lynching bill and breaking down of segregation of races.\(^{130}\)

Abernethy’s words were intended for a white audience in an effort to rally them against Truman and likely against the Democratic Party. Less than seven years later, in Abernathy’s home state of Mississippi, the first Citizens Council would be organized, and its “rallying cry” would become the very words this politician had used in his diatribe against Truman: “Stand Up and Be Counted.”\(^{131}\) What politicians such as Abernethy did in 1948 with the help of the southern newspapers was sow seeds of massive resistance that would be harvested less than seven years later to be driven at the state level.

The *Macon Telegraph* reported on February 10, 1948 that Senator Eastland vehemently opposed “President Truman’s civil rights proposals,” stating that Truman’s “proposals on racial segregation and antidiscrimination would ‘degrade, mongrelize and destroy the South.’”\(^{132}\) This

---


\(^{130}\) Ibid.


paper was also critical of Truman’s stance on segregation, and the editor wrote about that on February 11, 1948 in an editorial entitled “Out of Step With Himself.” The editorial suggested that “the President of the United States and the commander-in-chief of our armed forces ought to go into a huddle and decide what is their attitude towards segregation.” The editor’s alleged confusion arose because of recent events regarding the desegregation of New Jersey’s National Guard, based on its right as a state to not follow the federal government’s practice of segregated Armed Forces. New Jersey would continue to receive federal funding for its branch of the National Guard. The editor took umbrage with two issues. The first was that New Jersey was entitled to claim “state sovereignty” in the matter of segregation, and second, that it would continue to receive federal funding for the National Guard although it was not following federal practice with respect to segregation. It was the issue of state sovereignty that aroused the ire of this editor who wrote, “we may note the irony in this special recognition of state sovereignty.” He continued, reminding his audience of the importance of states’ rights in the South, “Of course, this has been the traditional policy of the South for which essentially we went to war in 1861. It seems a little curious to the southern people that segregation is now recognized on the basis of this same state sovereignty.” The author questioned, “why segregation should be good in private enterprise and yet frowned upon in the largest business in which the United States could possibly engage, namely, making war.”

Beginning on February 4, Georgia’s Albany Herald began a series of editorials against the PCCR and Truman. Much of the editorial page was devoted to a piece entitled, “A Political Legislative Program.” In this article, the author blamed the PCCR and its recommendations as the reason behind “two Southern States already threatening to secede from the Democratic Party.” The author also acknowledged that Truman’s civil rights speech to Congress was one in

which he adopted many of the PCCR’s recommendations. After explaining why the South would not approve many of the recommendations, he warned that, “Truman is banking heavily on the fact that the Solid South will remain solid, despite his taunts and jibes, but sentiment which is growing rapidly in Dixie may cause him to commit the first grave blunder of his 1948 campaign.”

Two days later, on February 6, 1948, the editorial page included another commentary entitled, “Presidential Worries,” in which the author claimed that the “talk of a ‘secession’ of Southern Democrats will amount to nothing in November.” Like many other white southerners, this editor curious and worried about Truman’s next move with respect to civil rights and cautioned Truman against further angering southern Democrats. “Just what his approach will be does not yet appear, though it is certain he will not continue to ignore the Southern outburst. He can’t afford to. He can shake his fist at Congress as a whole, but he dares not estrange the Democratic South.”

On that same day, the Albany Herald’s front page headline read, “SOUTHERNERS LAY FILIBUSTER PLANS: Bitter Feud at New High in Dixie.” The article quoted Senator Richard Russell of Georgia at length in his harangue against Truman, civil rights, and the possible end of segregation. Invoking World War II rhetoric intended to smear Truman, he claimed that Truman’s recommendation for the FBI to work with the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division was the equivalent of putting a Gestapo in place “to break down race segregation in the South.”

The next day, the *Herald's* editor emeritus, H. T. McIntosh, wrote an editorial entitled, “Senator Russell Scores Truman.” McIntosh described in detail Russell’s anger at Truman, claiming that “It is clear that the Senator is greatly concerned, and also that his dander is up.” McIntosh cautioned readers that while Russell was claiming that Truman would use “the power of the Federal Government to require whites and Negroes to attend the same schools, swim in the same pools, eat together and, eventually intermarry,” Truman “has not presented his case in just those words.” Nevertheless, this editor ensured that his readers received the full import of Truman’s message via Russell’s inflammatory language. McIntosh described Russell as “one of a number of Southern members of Congress who are raging at what thy[sic] see as an administration scheme to hog-tie the South and force upon it something which intelligent Negroes no more want than do the white people of this section.” He ended his editorial with a prescient warning:

> If Senator Russell’s understanding of what the President has in mind is correct, instead of improving racial relations in the South it will embitter them beyond repair for years to come. There are some problems which neither lawmaking nor force can solve.\(^{138}\)

McIntosh’s words were incendiaries to white supremacists intent on maintaining the social status quo, and they were also intended as a warning to southern African Americans – to go along with what white supremacists wanted, or else face violence.

Two days later, on February 9, 1948, the *Albany Herald* published a letter to the editor which was written by John U. Barr of New Orleans, Louisiana. In this letter, Barr attempted to portray Truman as a labor-loving communist sympathizer who was abusing power in his threat to use “FEDERAL POWER AND SNOOPERS to abolish sensible race segregation.” Furthermore, Truman’s plans to end “sensible segregation and states’ rights could prove a calamity to the en-

tire nation, including the deluded Negroes whose votes are being bought by this Truman alliance with the creed of the CIO and the Communist Party.” Barr then challenged southerners to create “a REAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY” that only included whites. Using hyperbole to describe the upcoming Democratic National Convention, calling it the “the PHILADELPHIA MONGREL CONVENTION,” Barr charged his fellow white Southerners to call a genuine Democratic Convention, and NOT IN PHILADELPHIA.”

Barr’s letter complemented a flier that he wrote and mailed to people all over the South at about the same time, also calling for a separate Democratic convention. D. E. Moore of Fort Worth, Texas received one of Barr’s fliers, which began with “FOR WHITE MEN AND WOMEN EVERYWHERE For the sake of our COUNTRY and the SOUTH I plead that you read the following:” Barr’s letter called for a “DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION BELOW THE MASON AND DIXON LINE” in an effort to save the “genuine” Democratic Party from the “alleged Negro-LOVING, pink and red MONGRELS who FALSELY called themselves Democrats.” Barr’s language harkened back to the bitter 1860 Democratic Convention in Charleston, South Carolina, in which disgruntled pro-slavery delegates bolted the convention to meet separately, and it also referred to the growing anti-communist fervor. In this letter, Barr hoped to spur his readers to action in getting “five million white men and women of the South” to “get a message of approval to the” South’s “thirteen governors” by signing “their name and address to one of these circulars and mail or carry it to their governor, ASKING FOR A DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION BELOW THE MASON-DIXON LINE.” He closed the letter by laying the responsi-

140 D.E. Moore to Mr. Truman no date, Harry S. Truman Library, Papers of Harry S. Truman, White House Central Files, Public Opinion Mail; “FOR WHITE MEN AND WOMEN EVERYWHERE” Signed John U. Barr, no date, Harry S. Truman Library, Papers of Harry S. Truman, White House Central Files, Public Opinion Mail. Moore’s letter to Truman indicates he is not supportive of Barr, writing “I received the enclosed circulars in the mail today. Can’t something be done to stop this? You may count on my vote.”
bility for the white South’s future on his readers, “Your political leaders are waiting to HEAR FROM YOU – if you fail it will not be their fault. ‘THE HOPE OF THE NATION RESTS WAY DOWN SOUTH IN DIXIE!’” In small print at the bottom of the flier, Barr gave explicit permission for the readers of his flier to photocopy it and instructed them how to get more copies. Barr was reaching out to the common white men and women of the South through the newspapers and via mass mailings, imploring people to act politically to assist him in spreading his message in building grass roots and widespread support against civil rights. This flier, as well as his letter to the editor of the Albany Herald, marked his attempts to create a groundswell of resistance against the PCCR’s recommendations at the local level in every town across the South.

Barr’s letters are particularly interesting because of the trajectory of his career as a white supremacist. Barr, a prominent businessman in New Orleans, was an ardent states’ rights advocate and an avowed segregationist. Through his letters, Barr sowed seeds of massive resistance that he would reap seven years later when he became the head of an interstate umbrella organization of White Citizens Councils, as massive resistance was swelling in the wake of the Supreme Court’s landmark Brown decision. The organization he would lead, called the Federation for Constitutional Government, would be created in Memphis, Tennessee in 1955 under the direction of Mississippi’s Senator James Eastland. Although this coalition was short-lived, it was successfully usurped by another rival white supremacist national organization, Citizens Councils of America, headed by Citizen Councils original founder, Robert B. “Tut” Patterson. Barr’s

141 “FOR WHITE MEN AND WOMEN EVERYWHERE” Signed John U. Barr.
letters in 1948 demonstrate a direct link between the reaction against *To Secure These Rights* and the massive resistance that erupts after forced desegregation in southern schools in the mid-1950s.

In the Deep South, newspapers in Alabama and Mississippi excoriated Truman and reported on the rumored secession from the Democratic Party. The February 3, 1948 headline from the *Birmingham News* read, “Dixie Demos Accuse President of Stabbing South By Asking Non-Lynch, Non-Discrimination.” The editorial from the February 4th *Birmingham News* attempted to calm the bolters by writing that “[W]hen tempers cool, surely Southern Democrats will see the wisdom of remaining within the party, and there working for moderation and a realistic understanding of the South’s position.” Although not an advocate for party secession, this editor made it clear that he agreed that anti-lynching legislation, poll-tax legislation, and an FEPC were not necessary – and could be dangerous at the federal level – and were “matters” that “should be handled by state action.”143 The editor from the *Huntsville Times* on February 3rd and 5th called Truman’s civil rights message a purely political move.144 The same editor reinforced this message by stating that Truman’s message was nothing for southerners to worry about, let alone “bolt” from the Democratic Party, writing that such an action “smacks of cutting off one’s nose to spite the face.”145 Despite their attempts to calm down the rhetoric, both the *Birmingham News* and the *Huntsville Times* continued to run front page and other stories about the South’s threatened secession from the Democratic Party.146

---

145 Editorial, “Democratic Bolt Talk Premature”, *Huntsville Times*, ADAH.
On February 5th, the *Birmingham News* ran an intriguing article about a poll that had been taken by one of its news staff writers, John B. Atkins. Atkins asked people on the street their opinion on Truman’s recommendations. All ten interviewed, including a high school senior, were knowledgeable about Truman’s special message to Congress, demonstrating that this topic was of great interest to common people in the South and not just southern politicians. The main points raised by Atkins were: federal anti-lynching legislation, ending segregation, a permanent FEPC, and federal anti-poll tax legislation. All ten of those interviewed were described as “bit-terly opposed to lynching” and nine claimed to support federal anti-lynching legislation. Five interviewees agreed with the creation of the permanent FEPC, and four said they would support a federal anti-poll tax law. Only one person interviewed favored an end to segregation and that was in transportation. One interviewee commented that, “Not all Southerners are boiling mad over” (President Truman’s civil rights program), as the informal survey indicated. This man was willing to voice his minority opinion yet he refused to have his name published as part of the article, fearing he might lose business. The other nine agreed to have their names and photos as part of the article.147

In Mississippi, newspaper headlines indicated that the Southern politicians were indeed “boiling mad” at Truman. On February 3rd, Jackson’s *Clarion-Ledger* ran no less than three front page articles about civil rights with the following front page headline: “‘Time for Action’: Governor Aims Hot Blast At Civil Rights Program of President: ‘Ten-Point Plan Is Stab In The

---

South’s Back’ Says Wright.” The very next day, the newspaper again ran two articles with eye-catching headlines about the furor that had erupted, and included quotes from several infuriated southern senators and congressmen. Both articles reported a rumored split in the Democratic Party, brought on by Truman’s seemingly unyielding civil rights advances. The *Clarion-Ledger* also included an article on its front page for February 4th about the Ku Klux Klan parade that had occurred on February 3rd in Swainsboro, Georgia. Not only did the newspaper want its readers to know of the reaction from the South’s leaders against civil rights, but also that the Klan continued to be a viable organization.

Three days later, on February 7, 1948, the *Clarion-Ledger* ran the following exclusive:

“DIXIE ASSEMBLY CALL!” Journalist Charles M. Hill’s headline was a banner across the entire top of the front page. Hill opened his article with “Gov. Fielding L. Wright will issue a call for an all-South convention of Democratic political leaders to be held in Jackson March 1, it was announced exclusively to the *Clarion-Ledger* by telephone early today.” Mississippi journalists were tracking Governor Wright’s movements and comments very closely during this period, as another front page article announced that he had arrived in Tallahassee for the southern governors’ conference, calling Wright “the man sworn to rebellion against Democratic Party policy of racial equality.”

---


149 John R. Henry, “Resentment Flames Across Southland, Leaders Speak: Wright Leads Wide Rebellion” and “‘Extreme Measures’ Talked By Dixie Spokesmen both from *Clarion-Ledger* February 4, 1948 page 1, Reel 29196, MDAH.

150 “Klan Parades in Georgia: ‘Fiery Cross’ Burns Again,” *Clarion-Ledger* February 4, 1948 page 1, Reel 29196, MDAH.

151 Hills, “DIXIE ASSEMBLY CALL…”

152 “Wright Arrives In Tallahassee: Nine Executives Expected At Meet,” *Clarion-Ledger* February 7, 1948 page 1, Reel 29196, MDAH.
Mississippi’s lawmakers were also vocal and spurred to action. The State’s House put forth a resolution which was covered in another front page article of the Clarion-Ledger. The resolution reportedly invited “persons dissatisfied with” the southern “way of life to leave the state and country.” According to the journalist, this resolution “was introduced amid applause from the state’s lawmakers.”

Editorials in the Clarion-Ledger supported the threatened revolt and, in one of these editorials, invoked Reconstruction rhetoric. An article on February 8th also referenced Reconstruction and how the South, back in 1877, was able to use its political clout to end it. This article intended to send a message to Truman, because it reminded readers that the South did not support the Democrat, Samuel Tilden in 1876, and instead chose Rutherford B. Hayes, who promised to remove federal troops from the South if elected president. Hayes became president and made good on his promise by withdrawing federal troops and officially ending federally-governed Reconstruction, leaving the South to figure out its own problems.

On February 13th, the Clarion-Ledger’s headline read, “State Unfurls Rebel Flag, Endorses Stand for South: Issue Call to White Democrats.” This article reported that “A nationwide call for all true white Jeffersonian Democrats to meet in convention in Jackson” had been put forth. A secondary article reported that “White Mississippians, blood of the Confederacy and of true Jeffersonian Democracy, overflowed onto the streets from Jackson’s city auditorium Thursday to express and to act upon their sentiments against proposed anti-southern legislation. This ‘voice’ of the people, united as one voice, represented men and women from all sections of

---

155 It Worked in ’76: --Party Revolt Won GOP Action On Withdrawal of Troops From South,” Clarion-Ledger February 8, 1948, p. 8, Reel 29196, MDAH.
156 “State Unfurls Rebel Flag…Clarion Ledger, February 13, 1948, p. 1, Reel 29196, MDAH.
the state and from all walks of life...Enthusiastic but orderly, calm but determined, the boys from the ‘forks of the creek,’ from hamlets and villages, towns and cities, met and agreed: ‘It is time to act’.\footnote{Gene Wirth, “Ovation Greets Governor Wright: ‘It is Time to Act’ Demos Agree” Clarion Ledger, February 13, 1948, p. 1, Reel 29196, MDAH.} These politicians, with the assistance of the press, succeeded in simultaneously galvanizing and then mobilizing many white supremacist Mississippians against Truman’s and the PCCR’s push for civil rights.

5.7 Conclusion

By the mid-1940s fissures began to weaken the southern liberal approach to solving race relations. A greater insurgency on the part of African American activists and the Left exposed the weaknesses of southern liberalism, and the reaction against the atrocities of World War II’s racial genocide supported the notion that the South’s treatment of minorities was anachronistic and inhumane. In 1943, Howard Odum, one of the leaders of southern liberalism acknowledged the ironic failings of it.

The rest of the world, thinking in terms of global democracy and our Negroes and northern friends thinking in terms of forcing the hand of the South have set goals so far ahead of us that relatively we are taking the stand of opposing something rather than trying to go forward.\footnote{From Howard Odum to Jonathan Daniels, April 23, 1943. Folder 431, in the Jonathan Daniels Papers, 1865-1982 (bulk 1935-1980), # 03466, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Hereinafter, the Daniels Papers).}

By the late 1930s, Odum already was being outpaced by other southern liberals, whom he believed were moving too quickly. He did not agree with “legal and political challenges to Jim Crow” because he believed that “folkways” were superior to governmentally imposed societal changes. Even his argument for regionalism offered an excuse for inertia in the South.\footnote{Gilmore, p. 228.} During this same timeframe, African American liberal counterparts such as Gordon Hancock tried to
convince their white colleagues that the white southern liberals were the ones restricting southern liberalism. The black activists understood that if the South did not change on its own, then the change was going to be forced from the outside.

I believe we interracialists should go as fast as we can and as far as we can to secure the physical and spiritual life of the Negroes and let the opponents say what cannot be done rather than dwell upon the impossibilities ourselves. I have a white friend who is an interracialist and when he sits in the meetings he seems absolutely incapable of seeing anything but what cannot be done…. This kind of interracialism is killing the cause in the South. Our great need in this hour is for white and Negro interracialists to see what can be done among ourselves rather than wait for outside interference.  

World War II caught white southern liberalism off guard and essentially called its bluff against the backdrop of a World War ostensibly fought against racism. Southern liberals were willing to have the United States fight and kill Germans and Japanese to end those racist regimes, but they did not want the United States government to force an end to racial segregation in the South. Despite growing African American activism, World War II inroads in civil rights, heinous white-on-black violence following World War II, and the PCCR’s report, the southern liberals under the leadership of figures such as Tilly, Graham, McGill, Dabney, Carter, and Odum were still unwilling to take a bold move to end segregation. Their main argument was two-fold: forcing the matter with legislation would not change the hearts and minds of white racists and would therefore not result in sustainable change and, if the matter were forced, unspeakable racial violence would ensue.

By the late 1940s, the southern liberal tradition failed to bring about meaningful social change in a timeframe that suited not only southern African Americans, but also the rest of the

---

country and many other countries who increasingly looked to the United States as the leader of the free world. Because the South would not change on its own, the PCCR put the federal government in charge of forcing the change. The white South reacted angrily, defiantly, and in some cases, violently, to this perceived hostile intervention as many southern liberals predicted it would. *TSTR* issued a death sentence for the segregated South. Southern liberalism, had it achieved its long range goal of ultimate integration, would have died a natural death. Instead southern liberalism became impotent once *TSTR* was published and therefore became another casualty of the post-*TSTR* era.

Despite the attempt made at softening sections of the report with respect to the South, the reality was that *TSTR* singled out the South as the area of the country whose civil rights record was the most egregious. Newspaper editors and journalists across the South ensured that the coverage of *TSTR* and later Truman’s civil rights recommendations to Congress were perceived as one elongated and unmitigated attack on the traditions upheld by the white South, which translated into newspaper coverage in the South that was overwhelmingly hostile to these civil rights advances.

The PCCR’s report issued in October 1947 with thirty-five recommendations ignited a fire in the South which then smoldered as 1947 drew to an end. The smoldering fire was then very quickly stoked into a conflagration after Truman, in February 1948, demanded civil rights actions from Congress based on a subset of the PCCR recommendations. The southern mainstream newspapers did an especially thorough job in covering this unfolding story, including printing increasingly inflammatory headlines in regional newspapers, especially in Mississippi, where the headlines fanned the flames of defiance and stirred the passions and memories of a lost cause, providing southern whites a new cause for which to fight and ultimately lose.
The publication of *To Secure These Rights* and Truman’s February 2, 1948 speech to Congress provided a common enemy across southern state lines, against which white supremacists could focus resistance and “stand up and be counted” by signing petitions and demanding of their leaders a separate Democratic convention. The newspaper coverage of rabble-rousing letters to the editor and politicians’ defiance to the President were the vehicles by which everyday white southerners were being challenged to take up the new cause against civil rights and the defense of the South’s segregated way of life. This newspaper coverage helped sow the seeds of focused, regional massive resistance seven years before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that declared segregation unconstitutional.
CONCLUSION: MANY A TANGLE AND MANY A BACK-SET

It would be wonderful to come back to earth again in 2047 or in 2147 and see just how good people have worked out this matter of minorities, - and especially the negro problem. I know it will be worked out, - tho with many a tangle and many a back-set.¹

D.P. McGeachy to Dorothy Tilly
December 5, 1947

The PCCR was arguably more important than other presidential commissions that had preceded it. Truman’s advisors had collected a group of intelligent, dedicated, and highly motivated people who, in the process of carrying out their mission, forged a very new and very “modern” understanding of civil rights that challenged the essential basis of race relations in segregation. The PCCR’s recommendations were, as committee member Morris Ernst indicated during the final review of the report’s draft, “a real revolution in the pattern of our national thinking, because we started as 13 separate Colonies, and there was no idea that the Federal Government would ever have anything to say about it, the local choice of election or the local choice of free speech.”² Furthermore, the PCCR was integrated not only racially but also regionally – making it a nationally integrated Committee tackling the issue of race relations and civil rights for all Americans.

Philleo Nash, who had been studying racial tension and race relations throughout the war and into the postwar period, believed at that time that, given the Cold War conservative Congress, the PCCR was the only viable solution to the racial issues plaguing the nation:

Congress was obviously not ready to act, and neither were the courts. Civil rights legislation and the watershed court decisions were still years away. Presidential action was required, yet there were limits on presidential power. What to do?

In the files, ready for use if the time should ever seem right, was a proposal going back to the early years of the war – a proposal to create a national commission on race relations. It had been rejected then, because it seemed inadequate to the emergency. Now it was all that was possible. Staff work was begun at once under [David] Niles’s direction, and the outcome was the President’s Committee on Civil Rights.\(^3\)

Nash admitted that although the end result of the PCCR was only a document, this report… was the first presidentially based document that dealt directly and across the board with such divisive issues as segregation. Some of its most basic recommendations were not acted upon for 17 years, and others have never been adopted. But it began a dialogue about human rights that was necessary to start the process of change. It was a key element in the campaign of 1948 and in Truman’s victory. The issue was dramatized as never before in modern times, and successor presidents were bound to follow the lead.\(^4\)

Seventeen years elapsed before Congress would pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and eighteen before it passed the 1965 Voting Rights Act. In a prescient statement during the heated debate over segregation and education in September, 1947, PCCR member Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. predicted the length of time it would take for the PCCR’s recommendations to come to fruition.

The interesting thing is that 20 years from now probably Mrs. Tilly and Dr. Graham will have led this very fight the way this report reads, and 20 years from now they will accomplish it…\(^5\)


\(^{4}\) Ibid.

\(^{5}\) Transcription from September 12-13, 1947 meeting, p. 908, Nash papers. The quote is from FDR, Jr. The discussion was about withholding federal aid to southern schools that maintain segregation.
Not everyone associated with the PCCR was as optimistic about the report’s staying power. Robert K. Carr, the PCCR’s executive director, expressed uncertainty about it during the last review of the report’s draft in September, 1947, stating, “This report, I hope, will have vitality over the next decade.”

The report would have vitality for almost twenty years after its publication, but the progress over the first ten years of its life was achieved without federal legislation; it was accomplished through executive order, the judiciary, civil rights organizations, state and local governments, religious groups, and in some cases individuals.

In 1958, the American Jewish Congress compiled a group of essays written by prominent political, business, religious, civic, and civil rights leaders into a collection entitled, *The People Take the Lead: A Record of Progress in Civil Rights, 1948-1958 (TPTL)*. This ten-year milestone report card indicated that the progress achieved toward meeting the objectives set forth in *TSTR* was impressive, if still incomplete, and had been achieved despite many obstacles.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote the keynote article for *TPTL*. His predecessor and creator of the PCCR, Harry S. Truman, wrote the introduction, comparing the PCCR’s report to the United States Constitution and the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, noting that the PCCR was the third time in American history that this country “took stock of its freedoms.” In his introductory essay to *TPTL*, Truman noted that since the PCCR had published its report, “Civic and religious organizations, veterans groups, labor unions and business associations, women’s clubs, youth councils – men and women in every walk of life and in every section of our land joined to close the gap between our ideals and our practices.” He stated that “*The people led the way*, and our courts, our Federal Government, our state and municipal legislators, our religious and civic leaders all continued the forward march.” Truman acknowledged that there was still

---

* Transcription from September 12-13, 1947 meeting, pp. 836-837, Nash Papers.
“much work to be done but that the current report [*TPTL*] would prove that America was making progress in the arena of civil rights.”\(^7\)

Vice-President Richard Nixon wrote the first essay for *TPTL*, highlighting changes in Washington, D.C., and the desegregation of the Armed Forces and transportation as the major accomplishments in the ten years since *TSTR* had been published.

Integration of the armed forces was accomplished, and segregation banned from all Veterans Administration hospitals and military post schools. Loans were withheld from new housing covered by racial or religious restrictive covenants – both the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans’ Administration took this firm stand. In Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States, practically complete desegregation has been achieved. Discrimination and segregation were banned in parks, schools, public swimming pools, restaurants, government facilities, theatres and all forms of public accommodations by virtue of either direct action by the Federal Government or persuasive efforts employed in conjunction with private community leadership. Federal regulatory agencies exerted their influence too – the Interstate Commerce Commission, for instance, banned segregation in interstate transportation and waiting rooms, and the Civil Aeronautics Administration forbade the use of federal funds for building segregated rest rooms, dining rooms and other airport facilities. And finally, the Federal Bureau of Investigation launched an ambitious plan: special civil rights training courses, to be held in cooperation with state and local police, for the nation’s 200,000 law enforcement officers.\(^8\)

What was conspicuously absent from the list was new legislation, but Nixon attempted to turn the inability of Congress to enact civil rights legislation for the past ten years into a positive when he added at the end, “With such a bold and varied program of action, the Federal Government has performed an impressive job in protecting and expanding civil rights – not by imposing legislation or by forceful authority, but rather by establishing the moral tone and serving as a pace setter for the rest of the nation.”\(^9\) His statement seemed to harken back to the old southern liberal position. Furthermore, his conciliatory tone may have also been in part to placate the


\(^8\) Ibid., p. 5-7.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 7.
southern Democrats since civil rights legislation had been passed in 1957 but, oddly, Nixon did not mention it.

Several civil rights authorities wrote articles for *TPTL*, including two former PCCR members: Channing Tobias, who at the time was the chair of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Dorothy Tilly. Tobias wrote about the progress made in the area of public accommodations in “Public Accommodations,” while Tilly’s article entitled, “Citizenship” addressed the status of citizenship and voting rights.\(^ {10}\) Tilly reflected on progress made since the PCCR had issued its report, homing in on the recently passed Civil Rights Act of 1957.

Today, we are looking back at the road we have traveled since then. One of the most important milestones was passed only recently when the Congress of the United States broke an 82-year deadlock to adopt a civil rights law guaranteeing federal protection of the right to vote.\(^ {11}\)

Although Tilly gave credit where it was due, she also acknowledged the shortcomings of the Congress when she wrote:

> Of course, it may be said that it is rather late in the day for such a law—That the 15\(^{th}\) amendment to the Constitution, passed just after the Civil War, was intended to insure that right. All this is true— and has been pointed out to our shame not only by our enemies in many parts of the globe, but also by our friends and those who would like to be our friends. Yet those with a genuine concern for the rights of man know that not much is gained by dwelling on past injustices, grave though these may be. The important fact is that a Congressional Law *was* needed, and it *was* passed.\(^ {12}\)

Tilly cautioned readers that this new legislation did not signify the end of the struggle for civil rights, claiming “It would be foolish indeed to pretend that all these abuses are erased. All

---

\(^ {10}\) Ibid., Tilly’s article appears on pp. 11-12 and Tobias’ article appears on pp. 30-31.

\(^ {11}\) Ibid., p. 11.

\(^ {12}\) Ibid.
is not well by any means.”¹³ Her conclusion, however, was characteristically optimistic when referring to what improvements had been accomplished:

These are the guideposts to the future. Ten years ago, we on the President’s Committee dared dream that the day would come when the Constitution would be the abiding government of all our people – and that our land would be what it started out to be, a nation without frontiers. Ten years is a short span as one measures history. But as the record clearly shows, our dream is today much closer to reality.¹⁴

In 1958, the most burning issue with respect to civil rights was the desegregation of schools. Father Paul C. Reinert, President of St. Louis University, tackled this topic in his update on public education for *TPTL*. Reinert acknowledged the work of the PCCR and also of the judiciary’s role in education’s progress. Reinert then focused on the accomplishments, but he also referred explicitly to state-level strategy of massive resistance and violence that had ensued in many southern communities as desegregation of schools was attempted. Reinert tasked all Americans with the job of eradicating the unlawful and violent resistance to these civil rights efforts.

Temporary setbacks notwithstanding, the record over the past three years shows remarkable progress. Prior to May 1954, 17 states and the District of Columbia maintained separate schools for Negro and white children. As of September 1957, 350,000 Negro children and 2 million white children in this area were enrolled in integrated schools. All of the Southern and border states but seven ‘hard-core’ holdouts – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia – have desegregated at least one school district; in several, complete integration is on well on the way.

It would be naïve, indeed, to suggest that progress has come without painful struggle. Nor can we ignore the long road ahead. There are still ‘hard-core’ recalcitrants in many sections of the country. And, as their numbers and strength decline, these elements, it is clear, do not hesitate to use violence to achieve their ends.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 11-12
¹⁴ Ibid., p. 12.
When such violence is permitted to explode – as it did in Birmingham, Ala., Little Rock, Ark., and Nashville, Tenn. – it is not a minority group alone that is threatened, but rather the morality, law and order of the nation as a whole. The American people, North and South alike, cannot remain silent in the face of lawlessness. Our repudiation of those who would set themselves above the law of the land and enforce their views with onslaughts against innocent children must be unmistakable.¹⁵

In a 1972 oral history, former United States Supreme Court Justice, Tom Clark, who had been Harry Truman’s attorney general during the PCCR’s tenure, offered the following about To Secure These Rights: “if you will study [the report]…you will find it is a blueprint of most everything that’s been done in the area of civil rights since that time.”¹⁶ Despite concerns that the PCCR might have been a blue ribbon commission without a lot of substance, the PCCR’s members took their collective job very seriously and produced a document that, in retrospect, can be seen as the charter for civil rights reform between 1947 and 1965.¹⁷ Moreover, in spite of the resistance encountered in implementing the Committee’s recommendations in TSTR, the PCCR had a profound impact. The process of assembling the PCCR’s report forged a new approach to civil rights for the postwar generation that would have a lasting influence on liberal thought and government action well into the 1960s. The committee’s report also signified a watershed, because once the extent of racism was officially documented, the federal government could no longer shut its eyes to the problem.

Congress took almost twenty years to pass the necessary and long overdue civil rights legislation in 1964 and the voting rights legislation in 1965. In the interim, other significant advancements in civil rights did occur through other means, and in the larger scheme of the history

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 15-16.
¹⁷ Carol Anderson, Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 3, 68-69, 104. One infers from Anderson’s comments about the PCCR was that it was a disappointment.
of slavery and the long civil rights movement, twenty years was not such a lengthy amount of time.

The landmark legislation of 1964 and 1965 did not eradicate racism, nor did it end resistance to civil rights or violent resistance to oppression. Twenty years after the horrible crimes of 1946 that preceded the formation of the PCCR, two northern cities exploded in race riots in the summer of 1967. Violent race riots erupted in Newark, New Jersey and Detroit, Michigan. In response to these tragedies that left several dead and communities shattered, President Lyndon B. Johnson created the Commission on Civil Disorders, commonly known as the Kerner Commission, to investigate the riots and propose recommendations. The result of this Committee’s work was a shocking report entitled *REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS*, published in 1968. The committee’s findings harked back to those exposed by Gunnar Myrdal more than twenty years prior in *An American Dilemma*, because they revealed that white racism had persisted and expanded despite the changes brought about by the civil rights movement.18

The modern civil rights movement is a long, ongoing struggle that had its origins in the 1930s and extends beyond its “classic phase” of the 1950s and 1960s.19 Yet an examination of the 1940s reveals this decade to be arguably the pivotal one in the civil rights struggle. During this decade, a World War fought against racism galvanized African American veterans, a critical shift in liberal thought occurred, the federal government intervened in civil rights and began a sustained twenty-year commitment, and anti-communist fervor underscored by a growing resistance movement combined to fight against the nascent federal civil rights movement. As the

---

previously inchoate civil rights movement became better defined with strategies and goals, it also became a clearer target for an increasingly better organized opposition. Many of these goals, such as ending segregation, were articulated by the PCCR in its 1947 report, *To Secure These Rights* thus setting the liberal agenda for reform for the next twenty years, with the expectation for future federal intervention in the matter of civil rights.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Manuscripts

Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery Alabama.


Jonathan Daniels papers, 1865-1982 (bulk 1935-1980) #03466, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Frank Porter Graham Papers, 1908-1990 #01819, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.


Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson Mississippi.


David K. Niles Papers, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

President Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights Papers, edited by William E. Juhnke, Black Studies Research Sources: Microfilms from Major Archival and Manuscript Collections, A Microfilm Project of University Publications of America, Inc. Frederick, Maryland, 1984. Microfilm # 1729, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Southern Regional Council Papers, 1944-1968, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, Georgia.

Dorothy Rogers Tilly Papers, 1868-1970, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Dorothy Rogers Tilly Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Dacus Library, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

Private Papers of Eben Tilly, Durham, North Carolina.
Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

Various Statements, 80 Cong. Rec., Georgia State University Law Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Various Statements, 85 Cong. Rec., Georgia State University Law Library, Atlanta, Georgia.


Woman’s Society of Christian Service (Methodist Church (U.S.) North Georgia Conference, MSS015, Archives and Manuscripts Department, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Oral Histories


Chapel Hill. Published by Documenting the American South [29 November 2011].


Johnson, Guy B. Interview with John Egerton. 22 July 1990. Interview A-0345, Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Published by Documenting the American South [29 November 2011].


Newspapers & Magazines

Albany Herald (Georgia)
Atlanta Constitution
Atlanta Journal
Atlanta Daily World
Birmingham News (Alabama)
Charleston City Paper (South Carolina)
The Chattanooga Times
Durham Morning Herald (North Carolina)
Goldsboro News-Argus (North Carolina)
Herald, (Sharon, Pennsylvania)
Huntsville Times (Alabama)
Jackson Daily News (Mississippi)
Macon Telegraph (Georgia)
Jackson Clarion-Ledger (Mississippi)
Jackson Daily News (Mississippi)
Montgomery Advertiser (Alabama)
Other


Secondary Sources


Middle State Tennessee Department of History. “1946 Columbia Race Riot: a story of anger, fear, violence, and the law in a Tennessee town after WWII.” Middle State Tennessee


