

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Denver, Colorado
August 14, 1953

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL



Dear Jimmy:

As you know, I have been thinking of the whole field of equality of opportunity. Since our recent lunch together at which we discussed the pending "School Segregation" case, it has scarcely been absent from my mind.

I think that it is incumbent upon people who honestly believe in the power of leadership, education, example, and acceptance of clear official responsibility to show constant progress in the direction of complete justice. We who hold office not only must discharge the duties placed upon us by the constitution and by conscience, but also must, by constructive advances, prove to be mistaken those who insist that true reforms can come only through overriding Federal law and Federal police methods.

As I observed to you, I feel that my oath of office, ^{as well} ~~as clearly~~ as my own convictions, requires me to ~~destroy~~ ^{eliminate} discrimination within the definite areas of Federal responsibility. You replied to the effect: "You can do no less."

There is one of these areas of Federal responsibility where my efforts may run counter to customs in some States. This is the area involved in the "non-discrimination" clauses in Federal contracts.

In presenting my views to you on this particular matter, I am keeping in mind the whole scope of our conversation. On the basis of that discussion, I am hopeful not only that we may reach fruitful understanding in this matter -- but also that, in so doing, it can be shown that progress does not depend on Federal fiat.

This matter of compliance with the law and regulations in governmental contracts is being put into the hands of a Committee which I am appointing. I realize that if one should follow up the words "Federal contract" far enough -- on an academic research job -- one could get into a lot of secondary and auxiliary activity, conceivably causing a confusion that would make any attempt at enforcement most difficult. But I do believe that States should cooperate in, and never impede, the enforcement of Federal regulations where the Federal Government has clear and exclusive responsibility in the case.

Assume, for example, that we should have a Federal contract under execution in the Charleston Navy Yard: *at the yard* I ~~believe~~ ^{feel} that if there should be any trouble in enforcing the regulations, you as Governor could instantly announce that, since this is clearly a Federal matter, beyond State jurisdiction, compliance should be complete and cheerful. *non-discrimination*

I sincerely believe that such cooperation would reassure those who seem to feel that the only alternative to stringent Federal action is no action at all.

I am, of course, *just as* dedicated to discharging the official responsibilities of my office, ~~and~~ I am determined to respect the constitutional authority and responsibilities of others. In this particular case, I believe it is incumbent upon us to make constant and distinct progress toward eliminating those things that ~~all of us~~ would class as unjust and unfair. In this category there clearly falls, to my mind, the right to equal consideration in Federal employment, regardless of race or color.

If the above makes sense to you, then I should like you to communicate with your fellow Governors who feel generally as you do in these matters, and to whom you referred when we had our recent conversation. ~~I hope to hear from you soon.~~

With warm personal regard,

Sincerely,

J.F.B.



The Honorable James F. Byrnes
Governor of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina