

VETERANS MARK MARINE BREAKTHROUGH



KEY PLANNERS of the 25th anniversary dinner celebration of the Negro's inception into the U.S. Marine Corps are these five officials of the Montford Point Marine Association, a three-year-old organization, formed in Philadelphia, and currently the nation's only Negro national veterans group. From left are Joseph Carpenter, president, Washington, D.C. (host) chapter; Sol Griffin, Chicago, national public relations director; Lt. Col. Kenneth Berthoud, vice-president, D.C. chapter, and one of the senior Negro officers in the Corps; Atty. Arthur Early, Philadelphia, national president; and Frank Brown, secretary, D.C. chapter. The celebration will be held in the nation's capital on April 20. --(NPI Photo) (See Story page 4)

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Negroes And The National Guard

TIME OF CHANGE

By JOSEPH L. TURNER
NEGRO PRESS INTERNATIONAL

PART V

The confrontations between Negroes and the National Guard have done more than anything else to bring to the attention of the nation the gravity and immediacy of the Negro crisis.

Successive "long hot summers" of social unrest and riots of increasing intensity, charges of "excessive and unjustified force" by Guardsmen and police, and the reorganization of state units with systematic elimination of Negroes from command positions and a host of other issues have startlingly brought the crisis home to everyone.

A commission reporting on the Newark riots of last summer accused the Guard of using excessive force in pointing out 26 persons were killed, and more than 1,000 injured, 1,400 arrested during the rioting that encompassed the days between July 12-17.

The commission also note the Guard shot up Negro-owned stores without justification, physically mishandled and verbally abused Negroes. The general contention of city officials and the Guard, it seems, was that force alone would solve the problems.

In the reorganization of the National Board, under a plan devised by former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and implemented by the state governments, Negroes in command positions have found themselves without commands, and declared "excess" as far as the Guard is concerned.

These developments seem grossly inconsistent with early recommendations suggested by the President's commission investigating the causes of civil disorders. The commission, headed by Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner, had suggested that action should be taken to recruit more Negroes into the National Guard; that Negroes on the front lines during the riots seemed to have some quieting effect.

Ironically, it was Gov. Kerner's own Guard that produced the shock of the season. Two Negroes, commanding the last predominantly Negro units, were reorganized out of their command positions and declared excess.

THEY WERE replaced with white command-

ers, who in turn brought their own staff officers, who also "happened" to be white.

The former Negro commanders appealed to the NAACP for support in their complaint to the governor, the President and the National Guard Bureau. Meantime, more than 75 per cent of the state's Negro officers are either being forced to take lesser positions, requalify in another field, or becoming excess, which means eventual discharge.

Heretofore, one of the most effective means of keeping Negroes out of command positions above that of battalion commander, has been to make sure they receive a different service branch in any reorganization.

This means that all officers must take time off their jobs and from their families and go to school to become requalified--something most could not afford to do. As a result, they were passed over in assignments of command positions.

Another "coincidental" development in the reorganization of the Illinois Guard units is that one of the Negro units which lost its commander has been designated anew as a military police unit, with an intensified program in riot control training.

THIS FURTHER substantiates the "white-oriented" myth that Negroes have a "quieting effect" in the face of a riot. It seems more like a further step in the systematic containment and elimination of Negroes by legally putting them on the firing lines.

The commission's report revealed in many different ways what blacks have been crying about in vain for generations. The causes of riots and social unrest are found in places other than the ghetto: they are found in the nation's attitude and ignorance and indifference to Negroes, in hardcore and deep-seated racism, and in the belief that as long as the Negro can be contained in the ghetto--with force, if necessary--the nation will not have to look at the horror of human injustice to its people at home, while it fights for freedom and justice and the American way abroad.

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There is also increasing talk of the awareness of the separation of the races into black and white societies, camps of intense hostilities, and of increased fear of the approach of summer.

The Negro does not want the riots any more than do whites, but "what happens to the dream deferred," as the late Langston Hughes wrote.

One final thing can be said: The report of the President's commission has given the nation the basic framework, and awareness of the crisis. It's time the country starts caring." The time for change is NOW!