

Document 34
Harry L. Hopkins Papers

F. B. I.

July 6, 1943

~~PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL~~
BY SPECIAL MESSENGER

Honorable Harry Hopkins
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Harry:

Supplementing that information which I have already furnished the President and you concerning the National Conference of the March on Washington Movement in Chicago, Illinois, I am attaching a memorandum summarizing data relative to the last session of July 2, and the July 3 and 4, 1943 sessions of the Conference.

As it will be noted from the attached memorandum, the organization approved the staging of an actual march on the City of Washington, the date of which is to be decided by the National Executive Committee of this organization. The preliminary plans include marches by local units of the March on Washington Movement on State and city municipal buildings, presumably for the purpose of protesting alleged discrimination and segregation. These local marches are said to serve also as training and conditioning for the participants in the proposed march on the Nation's Capital.

I wanted to point out, further, a report made by a confidential informant of a statement made by A. Phillip Randolph, the national leader of the organization. Randolph is said to have informed if a crisis results from the local demonstrations, then the actual march on the City of Washington will be called and those persons participating in it will remain in Washington until a bill is passed creating a "racial commission."

Information has also been received that at the evening session on July 2 postal cards were distributed at the beginning of the meeting for the purpose of urging the President to reschedule the railroad hearings by the Fair Employment Practice Committee and, further, to reappoint Earl B. Dickerson to this Committee.

I thought the President and you would be interested in this information and as additional pertinent data are reported, they will, of course, be made available to you.

With best wishes and kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

(s) Edgar

Enclosure

July 5, 1943

RE: NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE
MARCH ON WASHINGTON MOVEMENT,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

On the evening of July 2, 1943, the organization held a "Town Hall" meeting which was attended by approximately 650 Negroes and 20 White persons. Colden Brown, President of the New York local of this organization as well as Chairman of the national committee dealing with the Winfred Lynn Selective Service case, presided at the meeting which dealt mainly with the subject "Jim Crow in Uniform--The War's Greatest Scandal." Penny postal cards were distributed at the beginning of the session to be addressed to the President urging that he reschedule the railroad hearings of the Fair Employment Practice Committee and reappoint Earl B. Dickerson to that Committee. The recipients of these cards were urged to write their own messages concerning these two matters.

The following individuals spoke at the meeting: Vincent Baker, Negro, National Director of the Modern Trend Progressive Youth Group; James Farmer, Negro, Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation; Roscoe Mitchell, Negro, Richmond, Virginia, delegate at the Conference; David Grant, Negro, St. Louis, Missouri, delegate at the Conference; Norman Thomas, Chairman of the Socialist Party; Ira Reed, Negro, head of the Department of Sociology, Georgia University; and Edgar G. Brown, Negro, representative of the National Negro Council.

Colden Brown, as Chairman, announced at the outset that the National Conference of the March on Washington Movement proposed to lift "the lid from the foul Jim Crow situation" which exists in the United States. He alleged that the problem originated from the Federal Government itself and stated that it is a sad commentary that all groups can serve in the country's war effort except the Negroes. He further alleged that 90 per cent of the Negro troops in the United States are in labor battalions rather than in combat units and urged segregation in the United States Army be eliminated.

With regard to the Winfred Lynn Selective Service case, Brown stated the March on Washington Movement plans to carry it to the United States Supreme Court and warned if the Supreme Court fails to rule in favor of Lynn, then the Negro has no recourse to the courts of the United States. He added if the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Winfred Lynn, then the "Jim Crow policy of the War Department" will have to be changed. He stated that July 4 means nothing to the Negro soldier; that to him hymns and prayers are fraud and deception, for revolting hypocrisy and barbarism are rampant.

(It is to be recalled that the Winfred Lynn Selective Service case involved this individual, a Negro selectee from Long Island, New York, refusing to be inducted into the United States Army because of alleged discrimination and segregation in it. His attorneys, his brother, Conrad Lynn, and Arthur Garfield Hays of the American Civil

Liberties Union in their brief attacked the administration of the Selective Training and Service Act as being unconstitutional in that separate quotas are allegedly used to induct white and colored selectees. A writ of habeas corpus sought on these grounds after Winfred Lynn had been inducted was denied on the basis there was a failure to prove Lynn's induction was pursuant to a quota since Lynn had reported for induction alone on December 19, 1942, and not in an induction group. An appeal was filed and subsequently the March on Washington Movement indicated its desire to support the appeal as a means of attacking discrimination against and segregation of Negroes.)

Vincent Baker at the July 2 evening session remarked that Negroes are told not to be emotional over riots, yet if Negroes are to be indignant over the slaughter of Americans in Japanese internment camps then surely they are entitled to become indignant over the slaughter of Negroes in American camps. He then stated that Hitler and Goebbels could not have done a more effective job of breaking up American unity than "Stimson and Knox" and alleged that everywhere American troops have gone the prejudice of "Jim Crowism" has followed it.

James Farmer of the Fellowship of Reconciliation informed that "Jim Crowism" exists throughout the United States and the world at large and alleged the United States Army is under the hand of reactionaries in the South. He urged segregation be abolished for unity in order that true unity can be based on equality and justice. He then stated that Winfred Lynn is not breaking the law, rather upholding it in opposing segregation in the United States Army. He urged all Negroes to protest through demonstrations and letters and telegrams to their Congressmen.

David Grant avowed the riots in Detroit were caused by segregation inaugurated by industrialists and urged agitation, exploitation and the expose of existing conditions by Negroes to cure "evils of Jim Crowism."

Norman Thomas in his speech urged the abolition of "Jim Crowism" in America and stated also that no Negro or white man can hope to have freedom without doing away with the war system and conscription under it. He urged Negroes not only to fight "Jim Crowism" but to fight against the whole system which permits conscription to exist.

In connection with the evening meeting of July 2, 1943, it was ascertained by a confidential informant that the Non-Violence Direct Action Committee of the March on Washington Movement would stage a demonstration composed of Negroes and white persons at the Walnut Room of the Hotel Bismarck in Chicago during the dinner hour on July 5, 1943. It was alleged that the March on Washington Movement would observe the outcome of this demonstration to determine the course of further activity on their part. James Farmer, previously referred to was reportedly scheduled to make the initial demand for service at the hotel which would be followed by demands for service by other demonstrators.

On July 3, 1943, from 3:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M., a closed meeting was held at the Metropolitan Community Church in Chicago. This was a meeting of the Non-Violence Direct Action Committee of the March on Washington Movement and the purpose of it was to present the recommendations on future activity in this particular field. There it was recommended that plans for an actual march on the City of Washington be made at the present time and a date be set for this march. It was further recommended that local chapters institute marches immediately upon their delegates' return from the National Conference to be directed at State and municipal buildings. William Stuart Nelson, Dean of Religion at Howard University and Chairman of the Non-Violence Direct Action Committee of the instant organization, introduced a resolution which was adopted by the delegates:

1. That the actual march on Washington be used as one of the techniques of the non-violence, direct action, good will program;

2. That local marches on city and State government buildings be held by local chapters as soon as plans can be made which are to be used to train and condition marchers for the "national march demonstration" in Washington, and

3. That the time of the national march be determined by the National Executive Committee.

This resolution was adopted unanimously. In this connection, it is reported that A. Phillip Randolph, the national leader, in a private conversation advised if a crisis comes as a result of local demonstrations, then the actual march on the City of Washington will be called and those persons participating in it will remain in Washington until a bill is passed creating a "racial commission." The contemplated purposes of the "racial commission" are:

1. To outlaw "Jim Crowism" in the Army.

2. To investigate all racial questions in the Army and elsewhere

On July 3, 1943, the delegates at the National Conference numbering 104 elected a new National Executive Committee composed of 26 persons and divided the United States into 7 geographical districts. They provided for 3 members in each district to hold membership in the Executive Committee and for 5 members at large from New York City. A quorum of the Executive Committee was set at 5 persons, which body has been given the power to meet at any time and to issue the "call" for a national march. It was voted 103 to 2 to exclude white persons from membership in the organization. Randolph, who apparently accounted for the extra vote, was in favor of permitting Socialists to become members. Layle Lane, National Executive Committee member, favored permitting white persons to become members inasmuch as the March on Washington Movement has accepted contributions from them. It is to be noted in this connection that representatives of the Socialist party's newspaper "The Call" and "The Militant" which is generally

recognized as the official publication of the Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyite group, were permitted to attend the closed session.

The members of the subcommittee interested in the Winfred Lynn Selective Service case, referred to previously, issued recommendations at the closed meeting of July 3, 1943, that each local unit of the March on Washington Movement obtain additional cases of this character. They further recommended that Negroes be approached prior to their induction into the Army for the purpose of acquainting them with "the law" so that after they are inducted they can institute legal action against the War Department. According to a confidential informant, there was some discussion as to whether the Negroes approached should institute legal action before induction took place, although nothing definite was settled in this regard.

Among the other resolutions passed at the closed meeting of July 3 was that Communists be excluded from the membership of the organization. An additional resolution was that \$12,000 must be raised to finance the organization by the local units through staging rallies, concerts and dances. Another resolution, which was adopted by a vote of 104 to 1, urged assistance in winning the war and purchasing war bonds. In this connection Layle Lane opposed the resolution on the ground that the war is "capitalistic" and requested that her vote be recorded.

On the morning of July 4, 1943, a morning prayer was given for the National Conference at the Negro Soldier's Monument in Chicago. This was followed at 2:00 P.M. by a parade from the Metropolitan Community Church in Chicago to the Du Sable High School where the final mass meeting of the Conference was held. Approximately 50 persons participated in what was called the "freedom parade."

At 3:45 P.M., July 4, 1943, the final meeting of the National Conference was held at the DuSable High School in Chicago. In attendance were approximately 2,200 Negroes. The Chairman of the meeting was Dr. Charles Wesley Burton, Negro, President of the Chicago unit. He announced that the March on Washington Movement had decided to maintain the idea of marching on the City of Washington as the strategy to get rid of "Jim Crowism." He advised, however, this would be used only as a last resort. Burton also announced that the March on Washington Movement would prepare to discipline its members for the national march by instituting local marches upon various cities and State capitals in the United States. He welcomed an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, stating that that Bureau stood for justice.

The following individuals also addressed the meeting: Dr. William Stuart Nelson, who has been referred to previously and who was appointed to direct the "action program" of the March on Washington Movement; Dr. E. Stanley Jones, white, a missionary to India, who was described as an aid of Mohandas Gandhi; A. Phillip Randolph; Dr. James Forace, Negro, preacher of the Monumental Baptist Church; and

Reverend T. E. Chapman, Shilo Baptist Church, Englewood, Illinois.

In his speech, Dr. James Horace stated, "The Church must come to grips with the race measure, the Church has upheld segregation and it is time it started confessing its sins. The Church has preached dogma and not brotherhood. It is a sin for a Negro to go to the Solomon Islands to fight for democracy that he doesn't have at home. I want the FBI to communicate that to the President."

Dr. E. Stanley Jones addressed the audience on the subject of non-violent solutions to the race program. He described the non-violent action program of Mohandas Gandhi and stated it was a principle of "we won't hate you, but we won't obey you." He recommended the organization to institute such a technique.

A. Phillip Randolph in his speech stated the present war is one of imperialism and of white people's supremacy. He claimed the cause for freedom is in full retreat and the Allies may win but democracy will lose. He stated the Negro is not free and never has been free because of the inequalities which have existed in America. He compared the liberation of Negroes to that of other enslaved peoples. He pointed out alleged instances of segregation of the Negro in the social, economic and political fields in the United States.

In his speech Randolph advocated the members of the local units of the March on Washington Movement contact public utilities through sending committees to seek employment for Negroes with the public utilities. He further advocated if employment is not obtained the local units conduct picketing, institute marches and stage demonstrations. He added that demands would be made by the March on Washington Movement of President Roosevelt to gain employment for Negroes in all branches of the United States Government. He stated the March on Washington Movement proposes a united Negro political bloc, mass picketing of public utilities and marches on city halls and State capitals. He called upon the Negro soldiers to vote in support of anti-lynching and anti-poll tax laws as well as similar measures.

Randolph also remarked in his speech that the March on Washington Movement will demand an answer from the Republican and Democratic Parties on the question of racial discrimination. He also said the organization proposes to purge labor unions of discrimination by similar means. He severely criticized Monsignor Francis Haas, head of the Fair Employment Practice Committee, for his decision in the Mobile, Alabama, shipyards case, terming it another example of race segregation.

It was claimed by Randolph in his remarks that the Federal Government was entirely responsible for the race problem existing in America at the present time and it would only do what was right when forced to by measures proposed by the March on Washington Movement. He added that Congress will be called upon to enforce that section of the Fourteenth Amendment which provides that individual States discriminating against races be cut down proportionately in their representation in Congress.