

November 12, 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR GOVERNOR ADAMS

FROM: Maxwell M. Rabb



At the meeting of staff members held Monday morning, the following points were suggested for the President's consideration in connection with his conference with Justice Reed at 9:00 A. M., Wednesday, regarding the Civil Rights Commission:

1. It was agreed that while a meeting between the President and Justice Reed would be highly desirable at this time, the White House should be careful to have Reed realize that the initiative for action rests with him. The President could tell Justice Reed that he has an opportunity to perform a very valuable and challenging service to the United States and that he has his blessings.
2. The President should express his willingness to help the Commission but he should emphasize that it would not be advisable to have the relationship of the White House and the Commission too closely knit for fear of incurring adverse criticism from Congress and the press. The White House can and should be of assistance, but it should not attempt to give Justice Reed a binding set of directions.
3. The most important subject to be discussed is the position of Staff Director. The filling of the other staff positions is also of vital importance. Mr. Rogers and I have drawn up the attached list of men which might be submitted to Justice Reed as suggested guide lines.
4. The President should mention to Justice Reed the advisability of his meeting with the Congressional leaders because the Commission bears a considerable responsibility to this group and it would help him with the implementation of the program if he would confer with them from time to time.

5. While it would be advisable for the Commission to look into the Little Rock situation and should be encouraged to do so, Justice Reed should not get the impression that the White House is forcing him to take up the matter. The President could point out that there is a possibility that the Little Rock officials will invite him and the other members of the Commission to Arkansas to consider the situation.
6. It would be helpful if the public had an idea of the limits of Department of Justice jurisdiction and action. At the present time there is profound public ignorance on what the Government can legitimately do, and this has been a source of considerable embarrassment. The President could suggest that the Commission is in a position to give the people of the United States a much better idea of the manner in which the Department of Justice functions in Civil Rights cases.
7. A sphere of action in which the Commission could be most helpful would be the highly explosive situations (e. g. the Autherine Lucy matter and the Montgomery bus boycott) . An early analysis of the problem might well prevent the outbreak of violence as the result of some hothead's precipitated action.



MMR:sw