

Negroes

Services

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ FOR CIRCULATION AMONG GENERAL ELECTRIC MANAGERS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

General Electric Company.

For the information of General Electric Managers only and not for republication

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## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: A Long-Standing, Continuing Commitment in General Electric

*Like most other employers, General Electric managers are receiving quite a few inquiries and questions about the Company's efforts to assure equal opportunity for all citizens, regardless of race or creed. You have no doubt been answering such questions with information about your own component's efforts in this field, but the purpose of this BULLETIN is to acquaint you with some of the things that have been done and are being done elsewhere in the Company, so that you can present a broader picture of General Electric's long-continuing efforts to assure equal opportunity for all. We are not looking for publicity about these activities, which after all have a long history in General Electric; but you may find the information helpful in conversations or correspondence with individuals who have raised questions on the subject.*

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General Electric people can, as you know, speak with confidence about the Company's long-standing commitment to equal opportunity, both as a policy and as a practice. Our Company's leadership and progress in this field, despite some all-too-human exceptions, have been supported and commended by the knowledgeable organizations and Government agencies working in this field.

We are not late-comers leaping on a bandwagon; equal opportunity has been a matter of personal importance to the top executives of General Electric for many decades, and has no doubt been an important factor in the Company's success in attracting and developing outstanding people.

Gerard Swope, the Company's President from 1920 until the end of World War II, made determined efforts to be sure that General Electric's personnel policies were not

tainted with discrimination, because of deep personal convictions on this matter. The Company's next President, Charles E. Wilson, rose from the Hell's Kitchen area of New York to become chief executive officer of General Electric, and he too knew the importance of equal opportunity from his own experience. In 1946, when President Truman formed the President's Committee on Civil Rights, he called on Mr. Wilson to be its Chairman. The report of the Wilson Committee, as it became known, was hailed as a significant advance in the field. Ralph Cordiner's administration of General Electric was likewise characterized by Company leadership in this field; for example, General Electric was among the first nine companies to pledge their support for the Plans for Progress Program of the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity. Fred Borch, on succeeding Mr. Cordiner, made it emphatically clear that he regards

continued progress in the equal-opportunity area as an important part of every General Electric manager's assignment.

Under this kind of leadership, General Electric's record as a whole has been one of a Company which is sincerely trying to follow non-discrimination as a regular way of life. In all such matters, the Company's approach is rooted in the recognition that:

- Equal opportunity is a basic concept of our society and a birthright of every American;
- No nation can achieve full strength, health, and progress, if any segment of its citizens does not have equal opportunity to advance economically;
- As a Company seeking the best qualified employees for available jobs, we want to attract anyone who can contribute the needed

abilities, skills, and efforts to our operations; it would make no business sense to exclude any individual for irrelevant reasons like race or creed;

- Whenever a minority group is disadvantaged economically, we as a Company are disadvantaged too, by not being able to sell as many goods and services.

The following examples (by no means a complete list) are given as typical of the Company's quiet determination, without fanfare but with effectiveness, to advance the principle and practice of equal opportunity for all citizens.

### **Nondiscrimination in Employment**

About thirty years ago (1935), the Company issued a booklet over the signature of Gerard Swope, President, entitled, "G. E. Policy Concerning Wages, Hours and Working Conditions of Shop Employees," which stated, "There shall be no discrimination by foremen, superintendents, or any executives of the Company against any employee because of race, or creed, or because of an employee's membership in any fraternity, society, labor organization or other lawful organization." General Electric was one of the first, if not the first, of the large companies to announce such a policy in writing.

That statement was reissued in 1941 by the then President, Charles E. Wilson, and has been reaffirmed in many Company documents and statements through the years.

When the Company and the U. E. signed their first agreement in 1938, the same statement on non-discrimination was incorporated. A similar article on Discrimination and Coercion was later included in the first

agreement between the Company and the I.U.E. (C.I.O.) in 1950. Today it appears in agreements with the other unions with which the Company has contractual agreements.

Because of the importance of the subject, the Company has assigned services responsibility directly to a consultant in Management Development and Employee Relations Services. Dr. G. Roy Fugal of Employee Benefits and Practices Service is an interested, competent consultant whose specific responsibility is to help managers find ways to implement the Company's objectives in this field more effectively.

### **Constructive Action with Key Groups**

Since the Company operates in all of the leading market areas of the nation, it has been contacted frequently over the years by various groups representing interests of the Negro including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, etc.

**Illustrative of constructive action was a program launched in 1952 whereby representatives of the National Urban League were extended invitations to visit Company plants for discussions with local employee relations managers and other managers on personnel problems related to the Negro worker. Included were visits to many of the plant and office work areas for first-hand observations—twenty-two in all.**

While the visits resulted in constructive changes at some of the locations, the survey report by Mr. J. A. Thomas, Director of the Department of Industrial Relations of the National Urban League, was decidedly complimentary. It cited particularly the past and present efforts of the Company in its demonstrated

efforts against racial discrimination and praised General Electric's cooperation and forward-looking attitude.

An important contributor to the work of the National Urban League is its Commerce and Industry Council. V. B. Day, General Electric Vice President has been a member of this council and Dr. G. R. Fugal is currently participating with this important group. At the local level, some of our Company executives are helping to organize local chapters of the Urban League, such as at Syracuse, N. Y., Oklahoma City, Okla., and elsewhere. Already established Urban League Chapters are receiving the active support of Company representatives in Lynn, Mass., Philadelphia, San Francisco, and other cities.

### **Examples of Affirmative Action**

When General Electric opens a plant in any section of the country, our policy of non-discrimination is made clear from the start. For example, the Missile and Space Vehicle Division, from its very inception in 1956, has recruited and hired on a non-discriminatory basis, and qualified Negroes are to be found in numbers in practically every occupational category in MSVD. Moreover, and of equal importance, this component has worked effectively with the community at large, helping to promote the training of many minority group applicants for good positions not only in General Electric, but in business and industry generally in the Philadelphia area. It has worked actively and also contributed to the support of the new "Opportunities Center" officially opened in January, 1964, for Philadelphia youth.

In response to a sharp increase in demand for jet engines, General Electric's Engine Department at Even-dale, Ohio, experienced a very rapid build-up in total personnel in the early 1950's. From the start, steps were taken to establish firmly the concept of equality of opportunity for all. As a result, Negro workers at all levels have had opportunities to advance to important managerial or professional positions on the basis of proven performance. Today, Negro supervisors hold positions of responsibility in many areas of the plant, ranging as high as section manager.\*

\*It may be noted that in a company the size of General Electric, the attainment of a rank of Section Manager—Engineering in a Product Department is equivalent in responsibility to the rank of Vice President—Engineering in a multi-million dollar business.

## **'Our policy is clear...'**



**F. J. BORCH**  
President

*"Years ago the Company's policy of non-discrimination was formulated on the basis of good corporate citizenship. Our action was not dictated by government pressure or by a desire to be well regarded, but simply as recognition of an obligation to do what is right. Our policy is clear, and each level of management must make sure it is well understood—and fully implemented at every location."*

The Company's experiences at Evendale, as elsewhere, have demonstrated that Negro and white employees team up effectively when a job is to be done; that white employees will work successfully under a Negro supervisor; that Negro managers can successfully recruit white engineers to work in their components.

Many of the Company's Negro employees are prominent in the community locally. At Evendale, one man recently won a seat on the school board. One of our senior engineering executives, also a Negro, has attained a national reputation as a designer of advanced jet engines, and, during the recent "Go-for-5" drive, was cited for procuring the largest single controls research contract in USAF Aeronautical Division history.

Many other examples could be cited showing continued progress in all sections of the country. And by the way, when you visit General Electric's Progressland exhibit at the New York World's Fair, you will find reassuring evidence that "progress" for General Electric means human progress, no less than technical progress. Commenting on our World's Fair hiring policies, William C. Thompson of the NAACP wrote, "If we are able to encourage others to emulate your example, the World's Fair will truly be a peek into the future, a future full of more than just intangible dreams of equality."

### **Working with Government Agencies**

On October 5, 1954, when the President's Committee on Government Contracts had been set up, headed up by then Vice President Nixon, the Company issued to its managers the first in a series of Personnel Practices Information Letters. This letter spelled out nondiscrimination provisions applying to government contractors and transmitted a booklet describing the functions of the newly-created Committee. While this letter related only to government contracts, the nondiscrimination policy which it described was, of course, already general Company practice for all work, government or non-government.

During the following year, eleven Personnel Practices Workshops were held throughout the Company reaching more than 850 employee relations people, at which time the functions of the President's Committee, its procedures and rules were analyzed to insure understanding and compliance.

## **'It is not an optional matter...'**

*"Steady progress in providing equal opportunity will not only move our country closer to its high ideals, but also help to remove some serious obstacles to accelerated economic growth. General Electric's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy must continue to be implemented on a Company-wide front. This is what we all must do. It is not an optional matter for any one of us."*



**G. L. PHILLIPPE**  
Board Chairman

As a result of periodic written and oral reports to this Committee, the Company received commendation from General C. E. Ryan, Executive Vice Chairman of the President's Committee, who wrote: "... I feel that General Electric has a very outstanding, fair employment policy. You are rendering full support to the President's Committee for which we are grateful."

In mid-1961 Mr. Cordiner represented the Company at a meeting at the White House at which time General Electric became one of the first nine companies to sign up as a "Plans for Progress" company. This action voluntarily committed General Electric to its continuing program against any discrimination in its employment practices and to a program of affirmative action in the future. President Johnson personally thanked Mr. Cordiner and expressed his appreciation to the Company in writing for this support.

The Company has continued to carry out its responsibilities both under the "Plans for Progress" program and as a good corporate citizen. General Electric is giving and has given strong support to the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. Dr. Fugal is one of eighteen men from industry who serve on the Advisory Council to the President's Committee. Company personnel have undertaken special assignments relative to the furtherance of this Program and its intent, such as speeches before college president groups encouraging training; taking leading roles in encouraging local Plans for Progress activities. And in twenty-two regional seminars early in 1964, covering virtually all Company organizational components, Benefits and Practices Service is giving the subject of Equal Employment

Opportunity special emphasis.

In addition to the annual measure of employment of non-whites which must be submitted to the President's Committee, the Company established its own self-evaluation analysis in 1963. For those locations which seemed to be tardy in showing progress, Mr. Borch in February, 1964, asked the Group Executives to assure that action programs were in place.

In 51 routine Compliance Reviews by the U. S. Air Force in 1963 and early 1964, most Company components have been designated as being in general compliance. Furthermore, in eight complaints of discrimination filed against the Company, seven were closed out, all finding that the interested component had not discriminated unfairly as charged. The remaining case appears likely to be resolved with the same favorable result. This kind of record is especially noteworthy in view of the fact that 81 per cent of all complaints filed against employers have been resolved in favor of the complainants. However, these favorable results in no sense indicate that any manager can rest on his oars. This is a broad, sensitive subject where sound affirmative progress still has top priority.

### **Encouraging Education: The College Level**

The United Negro College Fund represents thirty-two private Negro colleges and universities. Several past and present directors of the Company have served on its development committees, including Gilbert Humphrey, Thomas McCabe, Sidney Weinberg, and Robert Woodruff. The Company and the General Electric Foundation have supported the work of this group for many years. Past grants included \$25,000 in 1954 and \$10,000 annually from 1956 through

1963. For the period 1964-67, a grant of \$100,000 has been arranged in support of the Fund's special drive to broaden existing educational programs, reinforce teaching strengths, provide more student aid, and upgrade laboratories and other facilities.

**The Company's relationships with higher education, however, involve more than financial support.**

General Electric was one of the first companies to carry on an active program of recruiting at the nation's colleges and universities. Because of the technical orientation of so much of the Company's business, the Company annually seeks to attract top-flight graduates in science and engineering. In this search for new talent, qualified Negro candidates have regularly been treated on the same basis as others being interviewed, with the natural result that a representative number have been employed for various positions in the Company. Engineering has been the predominant field of interest. When Howard University (Washington, D. C.) became the first Negro school to earn accreditation by the Engineers Council on Professional Development in 1948, it was added to the list of schools regularly visited by General Electric recruiters—the first national firm to do so. For several years, the General Electric visitation at Howard University was regarded as a big event. Today we are but one of many companies visiting Howard.

Currently, General Electric representatives visit a number of Negro colleges who have strength in engineering, science, or mathematics. Included are:

Alabama A & M  
Atlanta University  
Bethune-Cookman  
College (Daytona  
Beach)  
Flak University  
(Nashville)  
Florida A & M  
Morehouse College  
(Atlanta)

Agricultural and  
Technical College  
of North Carolina  
Prairie View A & M  
(Texas)  
Southern University  
(Baton Rouge, La.)  
Tennessee A & I  
Tuskegee Institute  
(Alabama)

The number of individuals hired from the Negro colleges in the past has not been as high as we would have liked, but this has been due primarily to an inability to match skills and abilities available with actual Company needs. The major steps currently under way to upgrade facilities, faculty, and the student bodies at a number of Negro colleges and universities should help considerably on this front. The intensified efforts by the Apollo Support Department, the Computer Department, and others to seek out qualified grad-

uates is already bearing fruit. General Electric's Mississippi Test Support Operation was one of only two industries who responded to a request from Tugaloo College in Mississippi, which invited several industries to a conference on how that institution could help supply the increasing demand for technically trained people in that area. As F. K. McCune, Vice President—Engineering Services, stated recently in response to an inquiry from a Big Ten University:

"Offers of positions for engineering school graduates are based on merit regardless of race, creed or color. Since performance in the engineering profession can be objectively measured to a considerable extent, we believe that engineering provides a good climate for employment and advancement based on competence and proved performance.

"Non-white engineering and scientific school graduates have achieved important positions here both as creative engineers and as managers of engineering work."

### Helping in the High Schools

Meanwhile, at the high school level, a number of Company components are engaged in programs such as Career Conferences to encourage careers in various skills required by the electrical industry, and to combat the "dropout" problem.

One particularly successful program was carried on at Benjamin Franklin High School in Philadelphia, with a substantial Negro enrollment, where school officials have credited the work of people from G.E.'s Missile and Space Division (many of them being themselves Negroes) with a dramatic rise in numbers of student graduates and a correspondingly sharp decline in drop-outs.

General Electric people frequently are on panels and in seminars designed to provide career counselling. For example, during the spring, at the request of the Southern University (one of the colleges listed above) and Louisiana's State Department of Education, General Electric is making available a top scientist to participate in a First Annual Louisiana Science Seminar, a program intended to encourage high ability secondary school students to pursue their scientific education.

In New York City, the Company has joined with other large employers to sponsor a new secretarial course designed as a spring-board for minority group women seeking jobs with national corporations in the metropolitan area. If this pilot course is successful, it may encourage similar approaches in other cities.

Negro high school teachers and college professors have been included regularly in the summer programs which the Company and the General Electric Educational Foundation have sponsored since 1945. As a case in point, eighteen of the fifty high-school teachers attending the six-week, all-expense paid program at the University of Kentucky in 1963 were Negroes—probably the highest percentage of Negroes ever enrolled in a given class at that institution.

The Prince Edward County (Virginia) public schools had been closed for four years (1959 to 1963) during which time the majority of the 1,700 Negro youngsters in the county had received no formal schooling whatsoever. A private corporation, the Prince Edward County Free School Association, was established in 1963 to operate these schools with private support until litigation concerning their reopening under public auspices was resolved. General Electric Company contributed thirty television receivers to the private corporation to enable the local schools to tie in with the educational TV station in Richmond.

### A Continuing Company Commitment

The specific activities referred to above are by no means exhaustive of the many ways in which General Electric is trying to be constructive in meeting one of the most pressing problems of our time. These specific activities have been listed only as examples which may be useful in quiet face-to-face discussions with those who express an interest in continued progress in these areas.

Seventeen years ago, the President's Committee on Civil Rights, under the chairmanship of General Electric's Charles E. Wilson, issued a report entitled "To Secure These Rights." That report sounded a challenge which rings true still today:

**"The problem of Civil Rights is a national problem which affects everyone. We need to guarantee the same rights to every person regardless of who he is, where he lives, or what his racial, religious, or national origins are."**