

Taft Knives FEP Bill Despite GOP Promises

By HARRY McALPIN

WASHINGTON — (NNPA) — Senator Robert A. Taft (Ohio), Republican leader in the Senate, has struck what may prove to be a death blow to the Fair Employment Practices Committee. He has completely reversed his pre-election attitude and apparent commitments on FEPC.

He bluntly told a delegation of white and Negro constituents from his state on Friday that he is not in favor of the bills now pending in Congress because of their compulsory features. He is introducing his own bill to provide for voluntary methods.

For the bills now pending in Congress, he told the delegation, "You won't have the enthusiastic support of many Republicans and no Southerners.

"I don't believe in a compulsory bill," he said. "I think the colored people are making a mistake."

"Pushing Too Fast"

At one point he said the present bills would deprive people in smaller offices of their right to hire who they chose. He stated he had some question that it might be limited to larger firms of 500 or 1,000 employees, who he felt had some public obligation. Later, however, he said he would not support that now because he had decided the voluntary method is better.

Lecturing the group in patronizing fashion — most of them being Negroes — the Senator declared: "I think you are pushing too fast. The colored people are much better off than they were 10 years ago."

He said he felt a voluntary bill is "better for the colored people." At another point of his lecture, he said he did not think Negroes

could make all their progress over night.

The Senator lost his poise when Judge William Hastie, invited by the delegation to accompany them, challenged his good faith on the FEPC issue.

Hastie told the Senator: "One other thing disturbs me. The Senator mentioned that last year the Education and Labor Committee voted out this bill without having any idea in mind of passing it. The Senator also mentioned the (Republican) platform did not mean a compulsory bill.

"Certainly the country got the idea a compulsory bill was intended in both instances. They are going to get the idea they have not been dealt with in good faith."

Taft reddened behind his ears, assumed his full Senatorial dignity, importance and forcefulness. He pounded on his desk and pointed his finger as he answered.

Hits "Colored People"

"I think if there is any bad faith," he stormed, "it is on the colored people who presented the platform and failed to tell the people what was in the bill they presented. No one mentioned a compulsory bill. I certainly did not intend the platform to mean a compulsory bill. If there has been bad faith, it is on the colored people."

Taft told the delegation that he had voted in favor of reporting to the Senate a bill for an FEPC, which bill did contain compulsory powers. He said he did so with the understanding that it would not be acted on by the Senate.

That was before the convention in Chicago where the Republican platform was adopted. The only FEPC bills pending in Congress before the time of the convention contained compulsory powers — the same bills Taft is now oppos-

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ing --and extensive public hearings had been held on them in the House Labor Committee.

Approved Bill Before Election

When the "compulsory" FEPC bill was reported to the Senate on Sept. 20, 1944 — just before the election in which Taft squeezed through by only 17,000 votes — Sen. Chavez, its sponsor stated that the bill was being favorably reported by unanimous vote without amendment.

Turning to Taft on the floor of the Senate, he said: "I ask if that meets with the approval of the Senator from Ohio."

Taft replied: "It does."

Commenting on the delegation's conference, Judge Hastie said: "My impression is that it was worse than I could conceive it could be. And it was so bad the rest of the Republicans cannot go along with Taft's idea."

Taft has introduced a bill for a permanent FEPC which is based on the committee being limited to voluntary methods of eliminating discrimination in employment.

Purely Educational

Taft's bill limits the duties of the proposed commission to bringing about the "removal of discrimination in regard to hire, or tenure, terms or conditions of employment, or union membership because of race creed or color —

"(1) By making comprehensive studies of such discrimination in different sections of the country and of the effect of such discrimination, and of the best methods of eliminating it;

"(2) By receiving and investigating complaints charging any such discrimination and by investigating other cases where it has reason to believe that any such discrimination is practiced;

"(3) By making specific and detailed recommendations to the interested parties in any such case as to ways and means for the elimination of any such discrimination;

Would Publish Reports

"(4) By conferring, a cooperating with, and furnishing technical as-

sistance to employers, labor unions, and other private and public agencies in formulating and executing policies and programs for the elimination of such discrimination;

"(5) By formulating, in cooperation with other interested public and private agencies, comprehensive plans for the elimination of such discrimination, as rapidly as possible, in regions or areas where such discrimination is prevalent; and

"(6) By publishing and disseminating reports and other information relating to such discrimination and to ways and means of eliminating it."

Provision is also made for the commission to make "a study and investigation of discrimination in regard to hire or tenure, terms or conditions of employment, in the departments and agencies of the Federal Government because of race, creed or color, and shall recommend to the Congress such legislation as it deems necessary to eliminate any such discrimination."

The bill calls for a five-man commission, one of whom shall be named by the President as chairman, all at a salary of \$10,000 a year each.

20 In Delegation

In the delegation of 20 persons which called on Sen. Taft were (from Cincinnati) Jesse Locker, Councilman; Joseph Fulton, attorney; Rev. Wallace M. Wright, Ministerial Alliance; Rev. Frank Veal, Middle District of the AME church; Mrs. Mattie Jackson, AKA sorority; Mrs. Mayme Johnson, AKA sorority; Mrs. John Weis (white), Council of Churches; Jerry Maxey, representing the Cincinnati Industrial Union Council; Theodore Berry, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Mrs. Mabel Smith, Delta Sigma Theta sorority; Miss Elsie Austin, Progressive Citizens' Committee and Delta Sigma Theta sorority; Myron Bush, Richmond Bluestein (white); Mrs. Jerome Jelin (white), Progressive Citizens' Committee; Miss Clara Hough, Negro Women's Civic League, and Rev. C. Baker Pearle.

From Dayton: Mrs. Marion Smith Williams, Frontiers club, and Charles Francis, NAACP.

From Cleveland: William O. Walker, Cleveland Call-Post; Lawrence C. Payne, and Harold Gassaway, Councilmen.

From Columbus: Cecil Thomas (white), Vanguard League and Pastors' association.