8-8-1957

Radio script of Senator Strom Thurmond for his regular weekly broadcast, recorded 1957 August 8

Strom Thurmond

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MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

The final fate of the so-called civil rights bill has not yet been determined, but whatever happens now, the teeth have been pulled from the original bill which came to the Senate from the House of Representatives.

I stated in the Senate on August 6 in opposition to passage of the bill that:

"The so-called civil rights bill should have been entitled a bill to empower the Attorney General to deprive certain citizens of their right to trial by jury. Also, it should have been labelled as an implement intended to be used to force integration of the races in the public schools."

I am thankful there were enough members of the Senate who considered the facts, as we presented them in debate, and helped us Southerners to pull out the sharpest teeth.

The amendments which we enacted greatly reduced the power which would have been placed in the hands of the Attorney General. Authority was removed from the bill for the use of military forces in cases of alleged civil rights violations. The Commission to study civil rights matters was required to report to Congress as well as to the President. Members of the proposed Commission were made subject to confirmation by the Senate.

Other amendments narrowed and more adequately defined the powers of federal judges in contempt proceedings.

All of these amendments have vastly ameliorated the original obnoxiousness of H. R. 6127. However, nothing could entirely
remove my objections to the bill except its defeat. The bill was submitted to the American people as a right-to-vote- bill, when actually it was a force bill.

Eighteen of us voted against the bill when it was finally approved by the Senate. However, there were 72 Senators who voted for the bill in its watered-down form.

Now the bill, as passed by the Senate, must be taken up by the House of Representatives. Several courses might be followed by the House. If a majority of the House should vote to accept the bill as amended by the Senate, it would then be sent to the President for his consideration. Either he would have to sign the bill or veto it. Although there has been some talk that the President might veto the bill unless the jury trial amendment is weakened, I would be surprised if he did.

In the event the House of Representatives does not approve the bill passed by the Senate, it will ask for a conference with the Senate on the bill. Then members of both the House and Senate would be appointed to try to reach an agreement on it. They would be limited to making a report between the extreme bill passed by the House and the more moderate bill approved by the Senate. They could not make changes outside those limits.

Members of a conference committee could make one of three recommendations to the House and Senate: They could recommend that the House accept the Senate amendments; they could recommend that the Senate recede from its amendments and accept the House
version; or they could recommend changes in the Senate amendments/
and that both houses accept a version different from the one
they passed.

It is likely that a conference committee would recommend
the third course I have described. Then the question in each
house would be whether to accept the report of the conference
committee.

However, there is much discussion here as to whether a
conference committee could ever agree on changes in the Senate
amendments/which would be acceptable to a majority of the members
of both houses.

You will recall that 51 Senators voted for the jury trial
amendment/and 42 voted against it. Any change in this amendment
would cause several members of the Senate to face a difficult
decision. But the House passed its extreme version of the bill
by a majority of two to one. Because of that, many House members
might want to demand a much stronger bill than the Senate passed.

I am proud to be one of the 18 Senators who voted against
the bill. As moderate as it is/compared with the House version,
unnecessary, unwise and unacceptable to me.

This is Strom Thurmond in Washington. Thank you for
listening and this station for making this time available each week.

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