

"... and, dear, in answer to your letter requesting more socks and underwear, I'm sending"

Negro Revenge

By I. F. Stone

MAR 17 1949



Washington.

Toward the close of the filibuster Tuesday night, Sen. Johnston of South Carolina read an editorial into the record. This editorial may serve to illustrate how thoroughly aware business circles are of the issues at stake in the battle over civil rights.

The editorial was a defense of the filibuster. Its source was the Mar. 12 issue of Business Week.

"In the present situation," Business Week said, "filibustering is not directed solely against the passage of civil rights legislation. The filibuster is being employed to curb the headlong enactment of the ill-advised Administration program fraught with great peril to a free society."

It is a pity the labor movement does not see its own interest in this fight as clearly.

As labor wakes up the morning after, the victorious coalition of Southern Democrats and Republicans in Congress may serve to remind it that the civil rights issue cannot be roped off in a corner.

The vote in the House for a phoney and precarious form of rent control, the threat that the coalition will prove strong enough to block everything else labor wants from public housing to the Taft-Hartley repealer, serve warning.

One reason the filibuster won is that the Negro was left to fight the battle for civil rights alone. The labor movement as a whole did not and does not care about civil rights.

In the filibuster fight, the labor movement was split; the leadership on the whole went through the right motions and said the right thing; the rank-and-file on the whole was indifferent; and part of the labor movement worked actively against the civil rights program.

The railroad brotherhoods, the machinists and the AFL old-line craft unions, all Jim Crow, are actively hostile to the civil rights program; some of them at least lobbied in Congress against the Barkley ruling. They make up labor's roll of dishonor.

Mr. Truman and the labor movement and every organization interested in any kind of social reform are going to have to join in a fundamental task of grass-roots education. It is in the hearts of white men that the battle can alone be won. White workingmen in particular.

There are unions that have a good record; the ILGWU, the UAW, the UE, the UMWA have done a job in education against prejudice. The Packing House Workers and the Maritime Workers have been trying.

In the Southern organizing drives, both CIO and AFL have at least fought race prejudice with their left hands while surrendering to it with their right in the shape of separate unions; few have been as courageous on the issue in the South as the AFL Farm Workers, or as vigorous in their propaganda as the Pulp, Paper & Sulphite Workers.

Mr. Murray and Mr. Green, of course, understand the issue

Frank Kingdon

been put to good use.

seen refugees boarding
Marseille, airplanes at
at Cyprus.

these ships and
y them to Is-
a loaf of
meat, some

t pound of
e. So every
Cretz Israel
ish kosher

*

: St. Pat-
a Christian

and have done their bit on it. But any member of Congress knows the difference between formal statements from top leadership in Washington and the voluble excitement from back home which shows people are aroused.

Even in the CIO the rank-and-file, if they think of the civil rights issue at all, think of it as a favor to the Negro. Until the white rank-and-file understands that its own bargaining rights, its own wages, its own housing, its own rent control are at stake, the Truman Fair Deal is aground.

This is retribution—the Negro's revenge; we cannot clear up the situation in Congress until we have cleared our own conscience.