

Toward Freedom

AN EDITORIAL in the Washington Afro-American (April 29) illustrates a common error in election year advice to Negro voters. It is the error of thinking in terms of meaningless party labels, rather than in terms of actual political alignments.

Justly concerned about "the rantings of Sen. Theodore Bilbo and Congressman John Rankin of Mississippi," the editorial asserts: "But the simplest method for handling Bilbo, to oust him from his committee chairmanship and yank him out of the spotlight, is for the country to go to the polls this November and elect a Republican congress."



In much the same vein, a Baltimore civic leader who was also incensed by the anti-Negro ravings of many Southern Democrats, posed for me this question: "Which would you prefer to have in control of our government: a party which includes the Southern polltaxers, who, you know, hate the Negro; or a party composed chiefly of Northerners, many of whom would like to give the Negro a fair deal?"

Unfortunately, Negro voters face no such easy alternatives as those posed by my Baltimore friend. Let us but recall that during the House debates on the soldier vote bill, it was the anti-Negro Southern Democrat, John Rankin of Mississippi, who acted as

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spokesman and virtual floor manager for the northern Republicans.

Nor is the Afro's proposed solution for Bilbo so "simple" as it may appear. Although a Republican majority in the Senate would, indeed, deprive the repulsive Mr. Bilbo of his committee chairmanship, it would by no means remove Bilbo's anti-Negroism from a commanding role in the Senate.

LET us recall that it was the defeatist Republican Sen. Langer of South Dakota who sponsored the motion to kill the federal aid to education bill, and that his able accomplice in that dirty piece of legislative trickery was the leading Republican Sen. Taft of Ohio, who now prates demagogically about discrimination against Negroes in the armed forces.

Let us observe that Senate Republicans are doing nothing to aid the current struggle for polltax repeal. Rather, they are sitting on the sidelines, watching the battle now raging between anti-democratic Democrats and pro-democratic Democrats. I fear (and I hope I am wrong) that the coming vote on cloture to break the filibuster will again reveal the Senate Republican leadership lined up with the polltax Democrats of the South.

It should be clear that on Negro freedom questions, as on more general win-the-war issues, the truly significant political divisions of today are not between, but rather are within, the Republican and Democratic Par-

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ties. The Bilbo-Bailey anti-Roosevelt Democrats vote in concert with the Republican leadership in the Senate. They are poles apart from such pro-Roosevelt Democrats as Pepper and Hill and McCarran and Mead.

IT SHOULD also be clear that whereas the reactionary Southern Democrats are definitely in the minority in the party led by President Roosevelt, the reactionary and defeatist Republicans with whom they now make common political cause are overwhelmingly in control of the party led by Hoover and Taft and Dewey. If any further proof were needed of reactionary dominance in the Republican Party, it was amply provided by the rejection of the pro-democratic, pro-Negro, win-the-war Wendell Willkie as an aspirant for the presidential nomination.

Thus, when the Afro calls for election of a "Republican congress," it proposes to entrench in power precisely that sinister combination of polltax Democrats and defeatist, reactionary Republicans who now work together to obstruct both the nation's forward march toward victory and the Negro's wartime march toward freedom. This is no way to get rid of Bilboism.

The Negro or any other voter who now seeks guidance from party labels cannot find his way in the politics of 1944 America. The only sure guide for those who truly want to push forward the boundaries of American democracy is to vote for those Democrats and Republicans who support the win-the-war policies of President Roosevelt.