

Polltax Repeal and FEPC

by Doxey Wilkerson

IT IS important to understand the basis of bitter congressional opposition to FEPC and to polltax repeal.

If we know the nature and the motives of our enemy, we are better armed for the struggle.

This week saw House passage of the polltax repeal bill at the conclusion of two days of debate involving some of the most vicious Jew-baiting, Negro-baiting and red-baiting ever heard in the halls of Congress. This week also saw the reactionary Rules Committee reject



President Truman's courageous plea for permanent fair employment practice legislation and refuse to allot the FEPC bill to come up for House consideration. Now the main struggle for both measures shifts to the Senate, where filibusters, further name-calling and trickery will be resorted to in an effort to prevent this passage.

These two bills propose nothing more "revolutionary" than to implement two elementary principles of democracy—(1) the right to vote, and (2) the right to employment without racial or religious discrimination. Why, then, are they so violently opposed? Who would gain by their defeat?

Wild and irresponsible charges of "states rights," "Communist plot," "Negro domination," "stab-in-the-back for white Gentiles," and the like, are, of course, pure hog-wash. These are poisonous smoke-screens behind congressional representatives of reaction proceed to do the work of their masters.

Real Stakes At Issue

But the real stakes at issue are not hard to discern. To keep 10,000,000 white and Negro southerners disfranchised and to relegate Negro workers to an inferior occupational caste is worth billions of dollars annually to certain powerful groups of exploiters in our country.

Just suppose the federal polltax repeal bill is finally passed and enforced, thereby giving the vote to millions of Southern citizens who never had a chance to vote before. Just suppose these millions of new voters begin to clamor for decent schools, health services, justice in the courts, unemployment insurance and

other forms of social security, and especially for decent wages and the right to organize into unions. And suppose they voted for local, state and national representatives who pledge to work for these things, and against those who oppose them?

Is it not clear that any such democratic development would shatter the oligarchic controls and super-exploitation by which a handful of big planters and financiers (many of the latter on Wall Street) now rule and get rich off the labors of the southern masses? And is it not also clear that Rankin and Bilbo and their ilk would quickly lose their jobs as congressional supporters of Bourbon reaction? This is why the anti-polltax bill is so bitterly fought.

If FEPC Becomes Permanent

Just suppose the Fair Employment Practice Committee is made permanent, and becomes increasingly effective in breaking down racial and religious discriminations in employment. And suppose, with these artificial barriers gone, millions of white and Negro workers begin to work together on a basis of equality, to form many new personal friendships and closer bonds of unity and comradeship in their union organizations.

Is it not clear that the profits now made from Negro-white wage differentials would disappear? Is it not clear that the power of the labor movement to protect workers from exploitation would be greatly enhanced? Is it not clear that the big-money boys who now dominate our government in their own selfish interests would have to yield more and more to the demands of people's organizations in their growing struggles for democracy and security? This is why FEPC legislation is so bitterly fought.

The main power of the opposition comes from the main class forces of reaction—semi-feudalistic landlords who hold great plantations and control the lives of millions of white and

Negro workers in the South, northern financiers who hold mortgages on the southern plantations, and powerful businessmen and industrialists in both the North and South who define their profit-seeking interests in anti-labor and anti-democratic terms. These are the main forces we are fighting.

Political Reaction

It is evident that the main opponents of FEPC and poll-tax repeal are also the most powerful enemies of Anglo-Soviet-American cooperation for enduring peace, of effective OPA measures to protect the wartime living standards of the people, of wage increases commensurate with living-cost increases, of decent standards of unemployment and health insurance, of federal planning for full employment—indeed of all major programs to strengthen democracy and security for the people of America.

The root sources of political reaction are much the same, whether the immediate issue be FEPC or Dumbarton Oaks. And the triumph of reaction on any one of these issues increases the peril of them all.

Thus, the struggle for polltax repeal and FEPC is a struggle to consolidate and strengthen precisely those democratic forces of national unity upon whom we all must depend for peace, security and enlarging freedom. Moreover, it is a struggle we can win. It is a struggle we have simply got to win.

We can break the threatened filibuster and pass the polltax repeal bill, restore the temporary FEPC appropriation, and pass the permanent FEPC bill in the Senate; and we can guarantee House approval of both FEPC measures. We can do these things—if the organization of the people get quickly into the fight and bring their overwhelming democratic pressure to bear upon Congress.

We really can win these FEPC and polltax fights—and we've simply got to do it!

Worth Repeating

SAVE THE FEPC is the title of an editorial in the New York Post of June 14, in which the responsibility resting on New York and the Republican Representatives for the petition to get the bill out of committee is stressed as follows: Indications are that two-thirds of the signatures so far on the petition are Democratic; that three-fourths of the Republican Representative from New York state have, so far failed to sign, and that Republicans could, if they wanted to produce scores more signatures than are needed.