

Truman Intervenes Against FEPC

SUPPRESSES DIRECTIVE; NEED GROWS FOR CONGRESS FIGHT

By CLAUDIA JONES

A leading Negro weekly editorially commented this week: "We shudder to think of what can happen without the protecting arm of the FEPC."

Well, insofar as the wind is blowing from the White House, the Negro people and labor had better take note. This deep concern, aptly expressed by the influential Afro-American, permeating the minds of Negro Americans, was dramatized in the recent protest resignation of Attorney Charles E. Houston from the FEPC. Houston's resignation and sharp criticism of the administration was due to President Truman's suppression of an FEPC directive which ordered Capital Transit Co. to employ Negro operators.

BASIC GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE

But Truman's act has far wider implications for the future of fair employment practices insofar as federal policy is concerned.

Under fire is the basic and fundamental question of the adminis-

tration's attitude towards minorities and the Negro people. It is this that is at the heart of the Houston resignation letter which charged that Truman's intervention "raises the fundamental question of the basic government attitude towards minorities. The failure of the government to enforce democratic practices and to protect minorities in its own capital makes its expressed concern for national minorities abroad somewhat specious and its interference in the domestic affairs of other countries very premature."

It is obvious that what we have here is intervention on the part of President Truman to condone discrimination.

It is intervention in the same callous Truman manner as it is administration imperialist intervention against the heroic peoples of China and Indonesia.

Truman's suppression of the FEPC directive is a categorical repudiation of the FEPC principle. It is of the same cloth as the abandonment of federal control of USES and its transference to state's control without a fight on Truman's part.

Obviously this is not at all an academic question, for practically coincident with this act is the announcement that some seven of 10 regional FEPC offices, including the New York office and all those covering the South, are scheduled to close in less than two weeks—by Dec. 15!

A FAIT ACCOMPLI

It is indeed a far cry from Truman's statement on this issue of last June. Then, when the FEPC was stymied in the House Rules Committee on appropriations, Truman stated:

"To abandon at this time the fundamental principle upon which the Fair Employment Practices Committee was established is unthinkable. Even if the war were over or nearly over, the question of fair employment practices during the reconversion period and thereafter would be of paramount importance. The principle and policy of fair practice should be established permanently as part of our national

Protest 'Lip Service' on FEPC; Truman Reply Evades Issue

The National Federation for Constitutional Liberties charged today that the Truman administration is giving only "lip service" to its avowed aim of eliminating discrimination in employment.

NFCL made this charge in a letter to President Truman, protesting his refusal to permit FEPC to issue a directive barring discrimination against Negroes on the Capital Transit Lines in Washington.

It backed up Charles Houston, Negro attorney who resigned as a member of FEPC in protest against the President's attitude.

NFCL chairman James Marshall wrote in his letter to the President that "your action in the Capital Transit case reflects a persistent course of conduct on the part of the administration to give lip service to the importance of eliminating discrimination in

law."

Well, the war is over, but apparently what was "unthinkable" then is becoming a fait accompli, with the able assistance of the spokesman who "warned" Americans against such thinking. Even then, it is to be remembered that Truman's "warning" was minus action.

Millions of Americans, Negro and white, agree that it is "unthinkable," all right, to abandon the federal principle of fair employment practices. They know that, despite pious declarations, the FEPC can be today likened to the ghost of a pigeon that has been starved to death. Already strangled by lack of appropriations, the contemplated move to close down regional offices in all but three areas—Detroit, Chicago and St. Louis—will reduce the number of regional offices from a one-time 13 to three and regional FEPC office personnel from 117 to about 27.

Moreover, on the first major test of President Truman's declared stand on the FEPC, we find it is the President himself who is abandoning the principles of fair employment practices, and in an agency controlled by the administration—the Capital Transit Co.! What a green-light signal to Big Business and reactionary Jimcrow employers!

Unless something is done quickly by an aroused labor-Negro people's movement, this important wartime gain, establishing fair employment practices as a federal policy—based on a decade of progress in which labor and the Negro people cemented their ties—will simply be wiped out by presidential decree! It represents nothing less than a body blow to the already waning confidence of the Negro people in the Truman administration.

It is of the utmost importance that the fight for a permanent FEPC becomes an important part of labor's over-all fight against the reactionary weather-signals coming

from the White House. When a federal policy which challenges the right of transport workers to strike, accompanied by government seizure, is followed by action to prevent Negro workers being employed on the basis of national non-discriminatory employment (declared in presidential executive orders) it is, to say the least, a pattern rife with danger for every Negro and for every worker.

True, it has its own "logic" insofar as the reactionary pattern of administration policy abroad and at home is shaping up. But what must be understood is that the suppression of the FEPC directives is aimed not only at the Negro people but at all labor as well. It is part and parcel of Big Business strategy to decimate the wartime gains of Negro workers, to create Negro-white strife and to destroy and break the labor movement.

It is similarly important for the Negro people and their organizations to speak out in strong terms on the issue of FEPC, as well as on all anti-labor attacks of Big Business and the Truman administration.

This is no narrow stake—it fundamentally affects the very heart of the struggle of the Negro people for complete equality and additional democratic gains—for the realization of such hopes lie only in close alliance with the growing democratic and powerful movement of organized labor.

LABOR MUST RAISE VOICE

Labor's voice should be heard immediately in protest of this suppression of the FEPC directive by Truman, now.

It is around the key and crucial issue of the permanent FEPC that the very fate of this principle of fair employment practices will be decided. This likewise makes it necessary for labor and the Negro people to demand in overwhelming tones that the languishing measure favorably voted for by the Labor Committee of the House be voted out. The petition to discharge the committee from further consideration of the bill—to get it before the House—still lacks some 60 signatures to make up the 218 needed.

employment since V-J Day, while doing nothing to make the policy effective."

The President, in a letter to Houston, claimed that since the government had seized the Capital Transit Co. during the recent strike, it was obligated by Congress to continue in effect existing conditions of employing—including discrimination.

"The property was not seized for the purpose of enforcing the aims of the FEPC, laudable as these aims are, but to guarantee transportation for the citizens of Washington and vicinity," said the President.

"As anxious as I am for Congress to pass legislation for a permanent FEPC, I cannot contravene an act of Congress in order to carry out the present committee's aims."

A large number of these are Republicans who reside in the New York area. Especially should support be given to the strategy of the steering committee led by Marcantonio and Rep. Norton which aims to get the discharge petition before the House and to utilize the calendar Wednesday.

Above all, now is the time for strong concern to be turned into action, to defeat these and sundry efforts to destroy the Roosevelt principle of fair employment practices and to assure its permanence in the federal government.

In Detroit the general membership of that city's Council of the National Negro Congress voted every possible assistance to the UAW strike.

LeBron Simmons, president of the Detroit Council, in a message to the GM division of UAW said the auto strikers' demand for a 30 percent wage increase "goes far and beyond that of increasing the take-home pay of the workers out on strike. This will set wage policy throughout the nation."

In New York the American Youth for Democracy likewise pledged fullest support to the General Motors strikers. At a meeting attended by 35 delegates from Detroit, AFL Local 107, International Pulp Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers also informed both AFL President William Green and UAW President R. J. Thomas of their complete support for the GM strike asserting "the welfare of every union working man depends upon victory for the workers over the selfish corporation."

The New York City Central Committee of the International Workers Order sent a letter to R. J. Thomas informing him of their support for the General Motors Strike.

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