

Toward Freedom

By DOXEY WILKERSON

(Continued from yesterday)

SENATOR LANGER offered an amendment to forbid discrimination "on account of race, creed or color," not only as already provided for in federal funds authorized by the bill, but also "in State funds supplemented thereby." This clearly unconstitutional proposal was strongly supported by Senators Taft, Bridges and Barbour. Its obvious purpose was to convert southern Democratic support of the bill into opposition.



The Langer amendment was passed by a vote of 40 to 37. "Yea" votes were cast by 27 Republicans and 13 northern Democrats. Among the Democrats were six outright defeatists and seven more-or-less progressives. It is probable that several of the latter (such as Mead, Green and Van Nuys), although sensing the reactionary purpose of the amendment, dared not put themselves on record against a provision which their northern Negro constituents might misinterpret as a *bona fide* anti-discrimination measure. Yet, a switch in two of their votes would have saved the bill. All southern Democrats opposed the amendment. Only three Republicans voted "Nay."

The next and final move was by defeatist Senator Taft, who earlier had declared his opposition to the whole bill "in principle," who then argued long and loud for the Langer amendment, and who now moved to recommit the bill to the Committee on Education and Labor—to die. His motion was passed by a vote of 53 to 26, the southern Democrats now joining with the Republicans in voting "Yea."

What are the lessons which this successful maneuver to block federal-aid-to-education should teach progressives?

First, Negroes should take careful note of the demagogic manner in which the reactionaries who dominate the Republican Party are willing to play football with the interests of the Negro people. In the primaries next spring and in the presidential and congressional elections next fall, these same Republicans will be calling loudly for Negro votes.

Second, the Negro people should also take note

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of the continued reactionary role of that Republican Negro sycophant, Edgar G. Brown. Whereas the NAACP, the American Teachers Association, and other Negro groups correctly opposed the Langer amendment, only Edgar Brown and his mythical "National Negro Council" could be cited in support.

Third, the American Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Labor had better examine carefully the quality of the legislative guidance they receive on educational issues. It is ironical, indeed, that the AFT, which pioneered several years ago in promoting federal-aid-to-education legislation, should now be instrumental in defeating the first good bill that had a chance to pass. It is doubly ironical that the A. F. of L., long a staunch champion of public education, should now find itself spread over the pages of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD opposing S. 637, in company with the Massachusetts Federation of Taxpayers Associations, the National Grange, the Farm Bureau Federation, and the National Catholic Welfare. This is the result of reliance upon the amazingly inept Legislative Representative of the American Federation of Teachers.

Fourth, progressive Congressmen should see in the fate of S. 637 one additional bit of evidence (if more were needed) of the urgent necessity for alertness and presence on the job. Greater clarity by only two of the progressive Senators who voted for the Langer amendment, or "Nay" votes by three of those who were absent (such as Wagner, LaFollette and Bone) would have opened up new vistas of educational opportunity for millions of underprivileged American children.

Finally, progressives generally would do well to realize that the people's front for victory might still be wrecked by the Achilles Heel of Negro discrimination. As in the case of S. 637, so with other win-the-war programs, the unsolved "Negro question" is a weapon which the defeatist enemies of our country can manipulate to sabotage progressive measures upon which the welfare of our entire nation depends. Now, in the course of the war, the whole rotten system of Negro discrimination must be uprooted from our national life. In the interest of victory and national survival, the cause of Negro freedom must now become the cause of all true progressive win-the-war forces in America.