

FEPC Delegates Make Fence-Straddlers Squirm

By CLAUDIA JONES

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It was the biggest fighting delegation to go to Washington in five years.

These 600 representative delegates from 12 states went to Washington, led by Councilman Benjamin J. Davis, to put the demand for action on the permanent FEPC bill to President Truman and Democratic and GOP congressional leaders. And they had a terrific effect.

The day the delegation met at the Old House building, the Senate, in a surprise move, under the leadership of Sen. Dennis Chavez (D-NM) brought the FEPC bill to the floor of the Senate.

That move was not all that the delegation wanted.

But it was a direct result of the presence of the delegates.

That's what they told David K. Nyles, presidential secretary, as they protested the refusal of President Truman to see them in person.

In addition to Davis, the delegation included: Clark Foreman, president, Southern Conference for Human Welfare; Dr. Max Yergan, president, National Negro Congress; Hoyt Haddock, National CIO Legislative Representative, Rev. W. Jernagin, of the Fraternal Churches of America and the Baptist Young Peoples Union; Mr. Halac, Hotel & Club Employees, AFL; Mrs. Goldie Irwin Watson, of the Philadelphia United People's Action Committee; Magistrate Joseph Rainey, president, Philadelphia NAACP, and Rev. David Licorish, who represented

Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, who was ill.

They reminded Truman that his "words of support for a Fair Employment Practice Commission were welcome but that 'this is not enough, especially when your deeds are contrary to you good words.'"

They specifically urged that Truman, as leader of the Democratic Party, "insist that every Democrat in the House sign the discharge petition or stand publicly rebuked by you as leader of the Democratic Party." They urged that the President "set an example" to the nation by denouncing the filibustering polltax-Republican bloc.

I said that the Senate's action in bringing the bill to the floor was not entirely gauged to the wishes of the delegates.

Sitting in the balcony of the Senate, you got this feeling as you heard the Hitlerite words of Mississippi's Sen. Eastland, serving notice that he was ready "to talk for three to four weeks."

Sen. Bilbo, generously declared that he planned "only two speeches" but that "they will be at least 30 days long."

The introduction of the FEPC bill in the Senate by Sen. Chavez now forces FEPC supporters to fight vigorously on two fronts—both in the House and the Senate.

Rep. Vito Marcantonio stated the Senate debate "represented a great risk, but that the bill was already out, and FEPC supporters in the Senate would have to (1) try to limit debate; (2) smash the filibuster; (3) invoke cloture. In the House, he said, "we will have to work much more rapidly to secure the 70 signatures needed to get the bill out of the House Rules Committee before the damage was done by the Senate filibuster."

The heat was put on Republican House Minority leader, Joe Martin, too. Thirty-two delegates representing 750,000 voters visited Martin in his office but he refused to see them.

Don't think that this protesting gentleman didn't feel the delegation's presence. He called several Republicans that day urging them

to sign.

The next morning another delegation headed by Mrs. Muriel C. Hall, ALP, and Mrs. Carrie Brisbane, GOP county woman, again visited him. This time they saw him.

The delegates demanded of this Republican whip in the House that he sees to it that his boys "get up on their feet to smash the filibuster now in the Senate."

At the office of Herbert Brownell, GOP chairman, John A. Danaher, representing Brownell said he "couldn't speak for or against the bill."

Robert Hannegan, Democratic national chairman, it was found, was out of town. A spokesman said he "couldn't speak for him, but he thought he was sympathetic."

Not a single paper in Washington, and none of the main news services carried a line about the delegation.

But the Washington community knew it was there. People poured out to hear the delegates.

You felt the people's support in the picket line of 60 Negro and white vets who left the caucus room to picket Bilbo.

You knew it when more than 70 delegates stayed over to make sure that pressure would continue against the filibuster.

The FEPC strategy planned by

the delegates include:

Continue action to secure the 70 signatures to the House Bill.

Pressure on Truman to denounce the Senate filibuster, and especially Eastland, Bilbo and Rankin.

Taking the FEPC fight to the picket lines. This last is imperative in view of the strategy of the polltax Republican bloc, who aim to tack on anti-labor amendments in the Senate to the FEPC bill.

A march on Albany directed at Governor Dewey, who has done nothing so far for the FEPC bill, continuous pressure on Joe Martin and other Republicans.

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