

FIRST OF 4 ARTICLES

12/20/61 Journal

# Civil Rights, Pro And Con: What Of JFK's Promises?

John F. Kennedy, the campaigner, made series of civil rights promises which are credited in part at least for his narrow victory. How Kennedy, the president, has moved to carry out these promises is the subject of a four-part series by UPI reporter Vincent J. Burke. The first dispatch follows.

Tomorrow's article will deal with three Alabama counties—Montgomery, Macon and Bullock—and U.S. District Court trials starting in Montgomery on Jan. 4.

By VINCENT J. BURKE

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The focal point of the civil rights struggle, once centered in Congress and the U. S. Supreme Court, has shifted to the White House under the Kennedy administration.

On orders of President Kenne-

dy the executive branch of the federal government now is intervening on a broad front on behalf of the Negro minority.

The nation's 19 million Negroes comprise 10 per cent of the population. Significantly almost half of them live in the North—many of them in the big industrial states which have the most electoral votes.

This helps explain the ardor with which both national political parties have been wooing the Negro vote in recent years. What specifically has the Kennedy administration done?

## WORK, TRAVEL, VOTING

It has launched a new program designed to prod American industry into giving better jobs to qualified Negroes. It is attempting to abolish racial segregation in all travel accommodations in the South.

It has expanded the drive, launched by the Justice Department during the Eisenhower administration, to remove barriers to Negro voting in certain Southern states.

Other moves are under consideration. One of the most important is an executive order to ban racial discrimination in housing. Kennedy recently told a visitor the order would be issued. He did not say when.

For many years the civil rights struggle was confined almost exclusively to the courts, reaching a climax with the Supreme Court's 1954 decree outlawing racial segregation in public schools.

The Democratic Congress last year failed to enact the civil rights legislation requested by the Eisenhower administration. Kennedy has asked for none and no legislation in this field is expected next year.

## ACTION THUS FAR

Here is what the Kennedy administration has done:

**Industrial Jobs:** By executive order, the President set up a procedure, effective early next year, under which thousands of government contractors must report to the government on their compliance with contract provisions barring racial discrimination in employment. The administration is attempting to persuade the 50 corporations holding the biggest

volume of government contracts to sign voluntary agreements. About half already have signed up.

**Government Jobs:** In an effort to upgrade the public image of the Negro, the administration put more than 50 in policy-making jobs. White House aides point with particular pride to appointment of Robert C. Weaver as administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency. They also are pleased with his appointment of Thurgood Marshall, top lawyer of the NAACP, to the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals and his selection of Clifton Wharton as ambassador to Norway.

**Travel:** New government regulations designed to halt racial segregation in interstate bus travel and bus terminals became effective Nov. 1. The Justice Department has persuaded virtually all of the 18 Southern railroads to enforce this rule.

**Schools:** Kennedy on four separate occasions has made public appeals for compliance with the Supreme Court's desegregation decree. The administration claims a share of the credit for the successful integration of schools to Atlanta, Dallas, New Orleans and Memphis this fall.

**Voting:** The Kennedy administration has filed court suits to remove alleged barriers to Negro voting in 12 counties. Preparation for some of these suits was begun by the Eisenhower administration which filed voting suits affecting six counties.

**Next:** How the Justice Department is intervening on behalf of Negro voters in the South.

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THIRD IN SERIES OF FOUR

12/22/61 Journal

# Negro Has Profited On Government Jobs

The third of a four-part series on the administration's civil rights activities.

By VINCENT J. BURKE

WASHINGTON (UPI)—"Most of our work hasn't yet become visible to the public. But you'll start seeing results soon. Qualified Negroes are going to get the best break they've ever had in coming for good jobs."

Speaking is a staff aide to a federal agency which President

Kennedy created by executive order last March. Headed by Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, its official title is "The President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity."

Its assignment: Eliminate racial and religious discrimination in government hiring and in employment practices of government contractors.

The committee has broader enforcement powers than predecessor agencies established by former Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Its spokesmen have been assuring Negro leaders: "We mean business."

Although Congress has rejected every attempt to legislate against racial discrimination in private employment, government contracts for almost two decades have contained a clause forbidding the contractor to discriminate. Now for the first time an elaborate reporting system is being set up to make sure they comply.

Starting early next year, thou-

sands of private firms with government contracts will have to answer in writing three pages of government questions. The reports will be designed to show whether the firms—knowingly or not—are following employment practices which discriminate against Negroes or other minority groups.

Kennedy has prescribed three possible penalties for non-compliance—public exposure, cancellation of existing contracts or denial of future contracts. The government for the foreseeable future is likely to rely on persuasion rather than punishment.

Kennedy's anti-discrimination order applies to firms awarded government contracts, or subcontracts, of \$10,000 or more.

Officials report that in recent months Negroes have been employed at jobs previously closed to them in a textile plant in South Carolina, a tobacco plant in North Carolina, oil production facilities in St. Louis, and industrial plants in Nashville and Dallas.

Some but not all of these developments were said to have stemmed from the filing of complaints. The committee has not publicized these actions. It believes it can accomplish more without fanfare.

## VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS

A third prong in the committee's attack on discrimination—and the most publicized one—is its effort to get the nation's biggest corporations to sign agreements with the government detailing specific steps to encourage Negroes.

One of the problems facing Negroes is that federally-subsidized state employment services in some areas—North as well as

South—have assumed that employers want to see only white applicants for certain skilled jobs. The Kennedy administration hopes to stamp out this attitude.

Some labor unions, particularly in the building trades, have rigid barriers against Negro members.

The federal government has no direct control over this. It has had only limited success, so far, in persuading unions to remove such barriers.

Another major barrier to a dramatic upgrading in job opportunities for Negroes is that on an average they have less education and job training than whites. The President's committee hopes to "motivate" more Negro youths to study and train for skilled jobs by convincing them such doors are opening now.

(Next: What Negro voters like most about the Kennedy administration's civil rights program.)