Gerald R. Ford Congressional Papers, 1948 - 1973, National Archives and Records Administration

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Press Release

Issued following a
Leadership Meeting

July 22, 1965

STATEMENT BY REP. GERALD R. FORD — Office Copy — IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Next week the Members of the House of Representatives will demonstrate by their votes whether they are members of an independent branch of government or simply yes men responding blindly to the manipulation of the Executive branch.

The issue which the House will face is fair consideration of the repeal of Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act -- a section which simply preserves to each State some right to regulate labor-management relations.

An attempt will be made as a part of President Johnson's program to force repeal of Section 14(b) through the House under the most stringent of gag rules. I anticipate a proposal that the House act on this important change of policy with only two hours of debate and that no opportunity be given to offer meaningful amendments.

If the House is not to sacrifice its self-respect, it will vote down the proposal that it shut its mouth, plug its ears, close its eyes and swallow the Johnson Administration's prescription without adequate debate and without opportunity to vote on important amendments.

The action expected next week is the latest manifestation of a disturbing tendency to avoid discussion of the subject of the repeal of Section 14(b) on its merits. The Administration has engaged in a cynical type of log-rolling on the subject. It has sought to convince city Congressmen to vote for a bread tax against their convictions in order to get repeal of Section 14(b) and farm Congressmen to vote for repeal of 14(b) against their convictions in order to get a farm bill.

If the coalition which the Administration is ruthlessly trying to put together is successful, how can Congress be considered to act as an independent branch of government?

(Dirksen statement - page 2)

Room S-124 U.S. Capitol—CApitol 4-3121 - Ex 3700
STAFF CONSULTANT: Robert Humphreys

STATEMENT BY SENATOR DIRKSEN JULY 22, 1965

A strange thing happened to the proposed constitutional amendment on apportionment of State legislatures on its way to the Senate floor. Disputes over the wording of the amendment have recently arisen and produced a deadlock in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I am confident that the Senate will in time act favorably on an amendment. Recent discussion shows the need for clarification of the effect of the proposal.

There is universal recognition of the need for reform of the system or representation obtaining in most states at the time of several well-known Supreme Court decisions. In fact, in 1955 a presidential commission reported to President Eisenhower that the strengthening of state governments called for adequate representation of the interest of urban areas in state legislative bodies. I welcome the reforms now under way in many states in the belief that they provide more equitable representation and help to invigorate state governments. I do not on the other hand, conclude that mechanical adherence to the "one man, one vote" principle should be imposed on both branches of the legislature of every state by Federal fiat regardless of the desires of the people. Everyone concedes that it is appropriate to require that representation in one house of the legislature of each state be based solely on the factor of population.

The proposed amendment does no more than permit the people of each state to employ factors other than population as the basis of representation in the other house if by periodic referendum a majority of the people in any state so desire.

It would not deny any minority group the opportunity to gain representation. Presumably any system of representation contrived to discriminate against any group would be struck down by the courts as a violation of the 14th Amendment.

Experience shows that the "one man, one vote" principle can be used to euchre minorities out of seats in legislative bodies. This can be accomplished by submerging minorities in large constituencies with at-large elections, as has been done in the State of Virginia to render less likely the election of members of minority groups to the State legislature. It can be accomplished by drawing district lines so as to spread the minority population thinly over a number of districts.

The issue which the proposed amendment presents is this: Shall we allow the people to make the decision about the basis of representation in one house of their state legislature, or shall we impose a decision on them whether they want it or not? We propose to meet this issue and fight every step of the way to preserve our Federal-State system and the historic right of the people of the several states to determine the composition of one branch of their own legislature according to their desires.

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